

# **BANDWAGON**

**THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.**

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2002



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**CLIFF GREGG**  
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**HUMAN  
CANNON BALL**

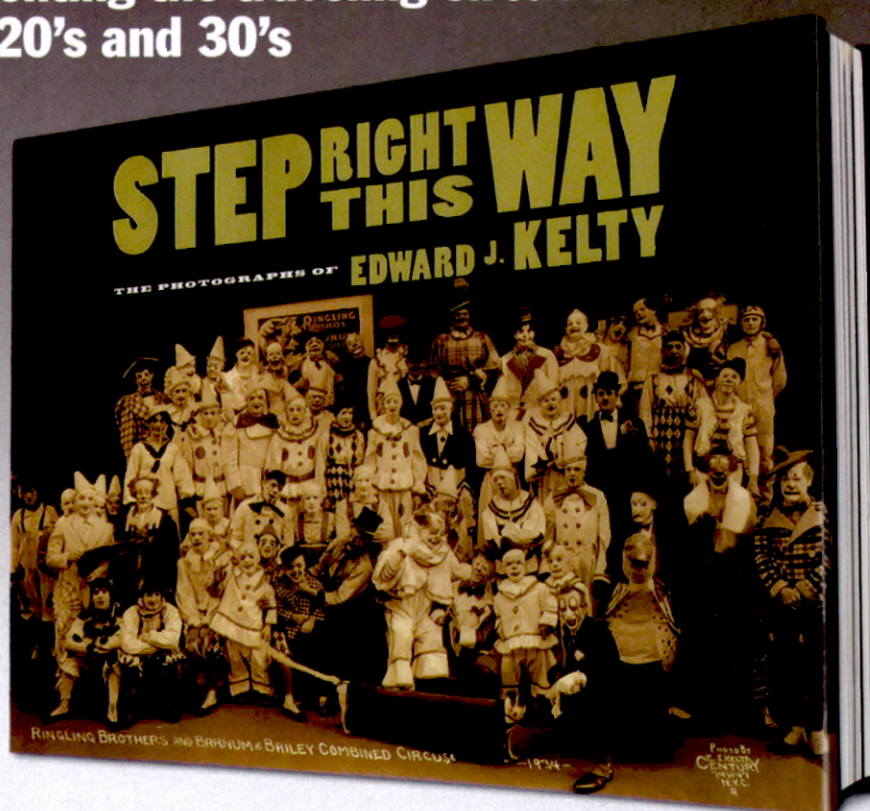
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WITH VIOLENT VELOCITY  
FROM THE MOUTH OF A  
MONSTER CANNON

**THE SENSATION  
OF THE CENTURY**

The poster features a large, black, wheeled cannon angled upwards from the bottom left. A human figure is shown in mid-air, having just been launched from the cannon's barrel, with a bright, starburst-like explosion at the point of exit. Two men in red uniforms are positioned near the base of the cannon. The background is a bright yellow, and the entire scene is framed by a blue border.



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1962 Photo

## **JOSEPH THOMAS BRADBURY**

**April 24, 1921 - - August 24, 2002**

President Circus Historical Society 1964-1965.

Associate Editor of *Bandwagon* 1961-2002

For whom it is well and truly said, "Duty, Honor, Country."

--Requiescat in Pace--

A full tribute to our long time associate editor, Joe Bradbury, will appear in the November-December issue.



# The Stickneys

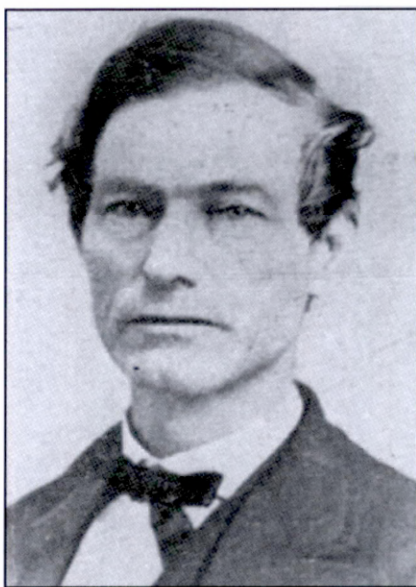
## Great American Classical Riders

By John Daniel Draper

The wonderful feats of riding, leaping and tumbling done by this family have been universally acclaimed in the circus world. William Stickney arrived in America from England in the late 1600's. A descendant, John Stickney, was the father of those who established a dynasty of great performers. There were five sons: Benjamin, wire walker and equestrian with the Mt. Pitt Circus in New York as early as 1827 and later with Astley's (1830) in London; John, concert performer and comedian with Bancker's Circus (1825) and Nathan Howes' Richmond Hill Arena (1833); Otis, coach maker in Boston; one whose identity has been lost; Samuel Peckhill, S. P., as he was generally known, founder of the great riding family.

Samuel Stickney (1812-1877) was a very patrician Bostonian, tall and gentlemanly in appearance, with a fair education. He was never apprenticed to any performer, having come as a youth into the business as a "fill up." Very soon he became a circus performer of note. He had a long career, both as performer and equestrian director, extending from an engagement with Blanchard in 1823 until his retirement from the ring in 1871. Proprietors or circus titles with which he was associated through the intervening years included Price & Simpson (1823-1826); Howes & Turner (1826); Quick, Mead & Fogg (1827); Palmer & Fogg (1831); Brown & Co. (1835-1837); Raymond & Waring (1840); Robinson & Foster (1842-1843); Howes & Mabie (1844); Howes & Co. (1846); J. M. June & Co. (1850); Welch's Grand National Circus (1851, 1853); Robinson & Eldred (1852); O. W. Ballard (1853); Welch & Lent (1854); S. B. Howes (1855); Joe Pentland (1856); Dan Rice (1858); L. B. Lent (1859-1864); and G. H. Metcalfe (1865). As late as 1866 he appeared as one of some fourteen featured leapers on the New York Circus.

In addition, he was proprietor or co-proprietor of the following: Fogg & Stickney



Samuel Peckhill Stickney, Pfening Archives.

(1828-1834) and 1838-1841); Stickney & Buckley (1844); New Orleans Circus (1845-1846); Stickney's Great National Circus (1847-1848); Jones, Stickney & North's New Orleans Circus (1849); Delavan & Stickney (1855); Driesbach & Stickney (1857). Also, he was on Stickney's Railroad Circus (Sam Jr., proprietor) as equestrian director in 1869.<sup>1</sup>

Sam Stickney met his death in Cincinnati, Ohio, on March 20, 1877, while visiting his old friend, John Robinson, from the effects of a fall on an icy sidewalk while coming out of the Woods Theatre.

During his years with the circus S. P. was quite versatile as a 4 and 8 horse rider and a scenic rider in such productions as the Courier of St. Petersburg and the Tailor's Ride to Brentford. In addition, he served as a ringmaster, horse trainer and equestrian instructor and he was a good manager for circus entertainment in general. He last appeared as a rider with the National Circus in New York City (October 28, 1861-March 22, 1862) where

he did a 4 horse act with his daughter, 14 year old Emma, riding on his shoulders. By this time he was recognized as an outstanding 4 horse and 6 horse rider. One of his most famous early pupils was the great scenic rider, Charles J. Rogers, who later was co-proprietor of Spalding & Rogers Circus. In one presentation he did a jump-up with Charley Rogers astride his shoulders. Samuel P. Stickney, along with Joseph Chiarini, John Robinson and Spencer Q. Stokes, helped form a great nineteenth century quartet of remarkable circus men.

From his marriage with Cristiana Wolf (1810-1861) in the early 1830's, Samuel Stickney had 5 children: Rosaline, Sarah Louise, Emma Auline, Samuel, Jr. and Robert. All of these, under the tutelage of their father, became first rate circus riders.

Although not a performer, his wife, Cristiana, was a costumer for the circus productions. Rosaline, Sallie and Emma were good riders. Rosaline was a very daring hurdle rider in her day while Sallie Louise was the most graceful. Emma was considered a "good" principal and manege rider.

Rosaline (1833-1857), the wife of Benoit Tourniaire, was known as "La Belle." They were married in Havana, Cuba. Her husband, actually Benoit Zhieskick, who had taken the name Benoit Ciseck Tourniaire, was the brother of Madame Louise Ciseck Tourniaire. He is not to be confused with another Benoit Tourniarie, the brother of Francois Tourniaire, the husband of the famous Madame Tourniaire. Rosaline's husband was a celebrated rider and juggler as well as necromancer and magician from the amphitheatres of Paris and Rome. The career of Rosaline Stickney as a principal rider began on James M. June & Co. as well as Spalding & Rogers Circus in 1850, followed by seasons on Welch (1851 & 1855), Spalding & Rogers (1852) and Ballard (1853). Unfortunately, she died at the height of her artistic career and fame



when she was only 24 years of age. She was reputed to have been tall and handsome on horseback with the majestic movements of a lady in the ballroom. Her riding act was always noted for its grace and fearlessness and traditionally finished with leaps through balloons and over banners.

Rosaline's daughter, Rosaline, also known variously as Christine, Crissie and Rosalie Stickney, was a principal equestrienne for a number of years from 1871 until 1889. She was first mentioned as La Petite Rosa on Stickney's Great Paris Exposition Circus. For many years she appeared as principal equestrienne on John Robinson's Circus (1874 to 1876 and 1879 to 1882). In 1874 she also posed as Cinderella with a 10 pony chariot hitch. For 1876 with her uncle, Bob Stickney, Sr., she rode 4 horses abreast and in 1882 she was a dashing and fearless 4 horse bareback rider. She was described as being small but able to place each foot on 2 horses Roman style and while moving with considerable speed about the ring, had two other horses abreast pass under her and between the two horses on which was riding. At this time she was also a thrilling hurdle rider.

Before 1882 she also rode on Stickney's New York Circus (1876) as child Rosa, on Burr Robbins in 1879 and during the winter of 1881-1882 in Cuba at Leon's Iron Amphitheatre.

On October 8, 1877 she had married Walter Greare at Lebanon, Tennessee.

From 1883 though 1886 she performed on Barnum and London as a jockey on the hippodrome track in the ladies' flat races and in steeplechase and hurdle races. The other ladies with her in the hippodrome department were May Stewart, Jennie Sawyer and Nellie Veno. In 1887 she went over to the Adam Forepaugh Circus and in that year she was chosen with her uncle, Robert T. Stickney, to appear on the historic combination of Barnum and Forepaugh in five horse acts. In addition, she rode in the ladies flat races. For the regular Adam Forepaugh season of 1887 she presented a troupe of performing dogs and did her 5 horse act. In 1889 on Adam Forepaugh she and Annie Yates rode the best ladies jockey race of their lives.

After 1889, although she sometimes performed with horses, she devoted much more of her time to performing with trick dogs that did aerial acts and somersaults: Irwin Bros.' Big Show (1890) and Frank A. Gardner (1891).

In 1895, in addition to presenting sheep

and dog acts, Crissie was both a 2 and a 4 horse chariot driver on Ringling Bros. Circus and was one of three lady jockeys in races on the hippodrome track. The next year she was with Shipp's Circus. After this time references to her are somewhat spotty. In 1901 she was an equestrienne on Tedrow & Gaggle's show.

In October of 1922 she listed herself as Rosalie Stickney, circus rider and animal trainer, c/o General Delivery, Orange Texas. Preferring to join a "one day" wagon show, she was at liberty for the winter with her troupe of fox terrier trick dogs. The next spring she advertised as Mrs. Rosaline Stickney, great rider in her day. She was busy training horses and dogs in Orange, Texas and would be ready to troupe in 1923.

Wintering in Orange in the winter of 1922-1923, Crissie hastened to remind the local citizens that many years before she had been there with John Robinson's Circus when the town was just a bit of a village. And then this little, age worn lady in her sixties, gave a bit of her history and philosophy. She had not only trained dogs but also horses and mules for 40 years or more and enjoyed every day of her labor. She loved animals because she learned to know them and how to handle them. Her advice to anyone who would have a real friend of a dumb brute, whether dog, horse or whatever, was to treat it with kindness. This little woman of the big top knew because she had spent her life among them.

Sallie Eloise (Louise) Stickney (1835-1886), sometimes called Mlle Heloise, "the pride of the American Arena," was a beautiful and graceful bareback equestrienne as well as a manege rider. She appeared on Welch (1852-1854), Ballard (1853), Runnels (1854), Driesbach (1857), Dan Rice (1858), Tom King's California Circus (1858), L. B. Lent (1858, 1859) and Cooke's Royal Circus (1860). By 1861 she was much the craze on Nixon's Circus at Niblo's Garden, Broadway, New York City. Featured as a principal rider and in hurdles, utilizing a long scarf she would



strike poses as various living statues such as Hellas, Helvetia, Dido, etc. and then retain them while galloping around the ring on horseback. Skipping rope also figured in this turn.

Advertisement for Robert Stickney on D. W. Stone. Pfening Archives.

In October of 1861 Sallie was privately wed to Omar Samuel Kingsley, who had been made famous by Spencer Q. Stokes as the "charming" Ella Zoyara, graceful lady rider. The newly

wed couple went to Australia but she returned to the United States in the mid 1860's. Soon after, Kingsley obtained a divorce and remarried. He died in Bombay, India in 1879. Meanwhile Sallie joined the John Wilson Circus at San Francisco in 1864 and was the principal rider on Thayer & Noyes at its opening stand at Pittsburgh, Pa. on April 22, 1867. On this show her father was a rider and the assistant equestrian director.

In 1872 Sallie married William Franklin, a principal rider. She then gradually drifted out of show business. Ten years later her daughter, Donna, had joined the Paris Pavilion Show and was quite expert on the slack wire. She also did a dancing skit with her mother. Sallie was on Batcheller & Doris in 1882. She left the show at Woodbury, Wisconsin because of a malaria attack. She returned to her native Philadelphia area, Cedar Hill, Frankfort, Pennsylvania, where, while recovering, she was writing a letter to her sister, Emma, when she learned of Emma's death. Sallie died in New York City on January 5, 1886 and was buried by the Actor's Fund, which had cared for her for the previous 4 months in her sickness and poverty.

In 1861, the youngest daughter, Emma Auline Stickney (1848-1882), was featured as a child wonder rider as she rode on the shoulders of her father in a 4 horse act on the L. B. Lent Circus. She also appeared on that show in 1860 and 1862. Actually as early as 1856 she had debuted on the Joe Pentland Circus. During the winter of 1865-1866 she gained prominence as a principal rider and worked with her broth-



er, Robert, for 6 months in Cuba in a two-horse carrying act or "Alaman" on Chiarini Circus. In 1866 and 1869 she performed on Thayer & Noyes and in 1877 on John Robinson's Circus. In 1878 she rode the Arabian stallion, "Pride of the Desert." on D. W. Stone's Circus. She was a manege rider on Adam Forepaugh (1879, 1881), on Robert Stickney's Imperial Circus, Mena-gerie and Museum (1880) and on Beckett's Circus (1882).

Newspaper ad used by the Stickney Circus in 1869. Pfening Archives.

Emma, in presenting "her beautiful classic act d'equitation, the flight of Nubia, literally floated in the air." While gracefully touching the back of her galloping steed with one foot, she appeared to be able to "remain there even if her footing were displaced."

She died at Detroit, Michigan on July 24, 1882 while traveling that season with Beckett's Circus. She had been stricken with typhoid 4 weeks earlier and was taken to the residence of a friend. Her brother, Robert, was then on John Robinson's Circus in California and Sallie was in temporary retirement. Her funeral was at the home of W. H. Baxter and she was interred in Elmwood Cemetery. Surviving was a son, Charles, from her marriage to Phil Blumenschein, bandleader on Thayer & Noyes Circus.

Samuel P. Stickney, Jr. (1845-1921) early became a hurdle rider. However, at the age of 18 he severely injured his left ankle and was forced to abandon his riding. After schooling in Philadelphia, he came back to the circus ring as a Shakespearean clown. Later, he married Ida Sherwood, the equestrian daughter of Charles P. Sherwood, the rider who originated the familiar "Pete Jenkins" act. Their son, Robert E. Stickney, never in the profession, became a master mechanic. At various times Sam, Jr. was with Dan Castello, De Haven Great Eastern, Grenier, John Robinson's Circus, Adam Forepaugh, etc. and in 1869 had his own show. His

second wife was Flora Fogg.

As great and famous as all of the aforementioned performers were, the most prominent ones were Robert Theodore Stickney (Robert I), his son Robert II, daughter, Emily, wife, Emma (not to be confused with his sister Emma Auline) as well as Robert II's wife, Louise DeMott.

## STICKNEY'S RAILROAD CIRCUS!!

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**THURSDAY, May 27th,**

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THE ONLY CIRCUS THAT WILL VISIT  
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Our Rivals make Processions,

**WE GIVE THE SHOW!**

The Best Organized Circus in  
America!

Infant Robert was brought into the ring wrapped in paper in a box. A clown "unpacked" him and handed him to S. P. who rode around the ring with him perched on his shoulders.

Early demonstrating that he was a child prodigy, in 1853 he rode his first hurdle act on a cream colored pony on the old Barnum Asiatic Caravan and Tom Thumb Show at Highgate Springs, Vermont. At about this time he did his first somersault on horseback on the Joe Pentland Circus. In his teens he was riding a principal act with back and forward somersaults, jump-ups and hurdles. As early as 1861 the press in Augusta Maine styled him a sensational rider, "the most reckless, brilliant and wonderful one in the world," as he appeared on L. B. Lent's Circus. Approaching adulthood, Bob at around 168 pounds and 6 feet tall was large in stature with perfect proportions, a coordinated muscular system and a marvelous sense of balance. Most principal equestrians such as Robinson, North, Glenroy and Fish were about 130 pounds in weight. Stickney's grace and appearance as well as his charm and magnetism caused L. B.

Lent to call him the "Apollo Belvedere," an appellation used for years in his billing.

In the winter of 1865-1866, while in a 6six month engagement with Chiarini in Cuba, he repeated in feminine attire Mlle Ella Zoyara's act with 5 pirouettes over 5 banners in once around the ring. After the 1866 tenting season with Thayer & Noyes, Stickney in 1867 went abroad to the Great Paris Exhibition to perform in the "All Star Champion Circus," produced by Spalding, Bidwell, Quick, Avery Smith and Nathans. Among the stars in addition to Stickney were James Robinson, bareback rider, James H. Madigan, ringmaster, rider and leaper, Frank Pastor, pad rider, Marqueze, champion hurdle rider and Tom Peppers, who rode a buffalo. Also, there were Mme Gertner and Mlles Kennebel and Rosethea, fine manege, pad and bareback riders. Stickney did not ride in Paris because he could not find a horse there strong enough to support him while doing his acrobatics.

After playing in Paris for over eight months, the show moved to London for four additional months at Tom McCullom's High Holborn Amphitheatre. Here Bob did high and lofty tumbling and was one of the first men in Europe to do flip-flaps all the way around the ring. Returning to America he was with L. B. Lent in New York City through the winter of 1868-1869. Continuing with L. B. Lent in 1870, Bob Stickney along with James Melville and Mlle. Caroline Rolland constituted a trio of very prominent bareback riders. While in Cincinnati on that Lent tour, he met Katie V. Robinson, only daughter of old John Robinson, and immediately fell in love with her. One week later, on September 5, 1870, they were married.

Remaining on L. B. Lent for 3 months after the marriage, he then joined John Robinson's Circus in 1871 for a salary of \$150 per week plus the side show privileges, which netted him an additional 10 to 15 thousand dollars every 9 months. Here he shared honors with John Wilson, the great 4 horse rider. Thus began the long association of the Stickneys, off and on, with the Robinson family and John Robinson's Circus.

In August of 1871 James Melville challenged Stickney to a champion riding contest. Bob accepted the challenge and posted the required \$1000 fee, but eventually the match was indefinitely postponed because of engagements to which both were committed.

Robert John Danville Stickney was born



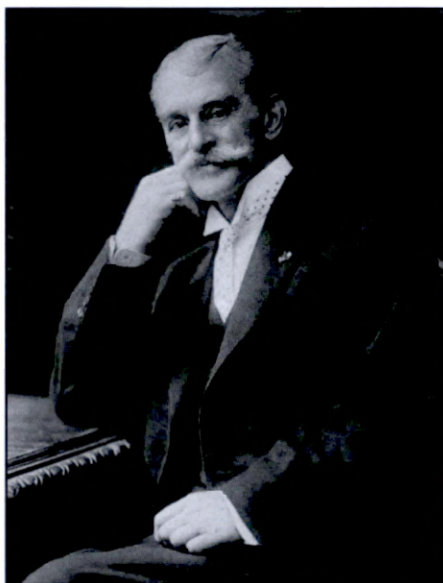
on August 23, 1872 at the Aetna House in Danville, Illinois while his parents were on tour with John Robinson's Circus. As the first grandchild of old John Robinson, he was named for that noted proprietor as well as for his father and also for the city in which he was born. He came to be called Robert, Jr. to distinguish him from his father. In 1874 Kate Stickney died of childbed fever during the birth of a second son who did not survive.

Robert Stickney, Sr. remained with John Robinson's for eight years performing some of the most daring and sensational feats in riding and leaping then known to the circus world. In 1872 these stunts included a variety of somersaults in his principal act as his mount circled the ring. One was a forward foot to foot while facing forward on the horse and also a forward somersault while facing backward. Other accomplishments were in rapid succession a backward back through a balloon, a foot to foot through a second balloon while facing forward and a backward forward through a third balloon. A backward back refers to a backward somersault thrown while facing backwards on the horse and a backward forward is a forward somersault while facing backwards on the horse. Also, it must be remembered that the balloons referred to here were paper covered hoops.

Three seasons later he did a double somersault leap from springboard over 24 horses lined up side by side. The distance was approximately 35 feet and was confirmed by the famous clown, John Lowlow. In 1878 when he traveled with the one ring D. W. Stone Circus, Bob was billed as "America's Greatest Native born horseman, single, 4 and 6 horse rider." Over the years the Stickneys always evidenced great pride in being presented as native-born American performers. At this time Bob Stickney, "Champion Leaper of the Universe," issued a \$5000 challenge to all comers of any clime or nation. For this season his sister, Emma Auline, was also on the show. He was engaged at a salary of \$300 per week. In addition to breaking horses, he did both pad and bareback riding as well as a superior 4 horse act. The show closed after eight weeks because of the excessive salaries that the management had contracted with the performers. After the closing, Bob went back to John Robinson's Circus.

In 1879 Bob, at the head of twelve male riders on Adam Forepaugh, rode and drove his 8 horse act and did a bareback principal

act. His salary was \$225 per week. In referring to his 8 horse act, let us see what Stickney had to say about it. "I was engaged by Mr. Forepaugh to ride 4 horses. We rehearsed that spring in Louisville, Kentucky. Addie Forepaugh, son of the owner, was an elephant trainer and drove 30 horses around the hippodrome track.



Robert Theodore Stickney. Pfening Archives.

He was the first, to my knowledge, to do this. Bud Gorman did it later with the Forepaugh-Sells show. Addie had 2 sets of fours and he and I agreed to break them in an 8 horse act. Addie was ringmaster and, with his assistance, I managed to perform the double quartet, working the horses singly, doubly and in various other positions. This act more than pleased Adam Forepaugh. He called me the 'Stickney boy' and, upon learning that we had the 8 horses broke, asked me if there would be an additional cost for the turn. When I said 'no' the old man's face brightened up and he exclaimed 'I'll bill you life size from there to there,' at the same time pointing from one end of the ring to the other. He did paper this particular act heavily and only missed seeing one performance of it the whole season. Mr. Forepaugh always kept his seat at the gate and watched the front of the show, for he figured well that such is the place for an owner. He left the inside to his son."<sup>2</sup>

That same year, in order to fill in an emergency when Bill Conwell lost his nerve, Bob also did a double somersault over 10 elephants. In practice he once did a triple from a leaping board, but he

refused to do it in public and gradually declined to do any more leaping because of the risk of shortening his career as an equestrian.

In 1880 he took out his one ring Robert Stickney's Imperial Circus, Menagerie and Museum on which he and his sister, Emma Auline, were 2 of the 5 equestrians. In the season of 1881, after a brief period on Dan Rice Circus, he went to the S. H. Barrett Shows. He left that show on November 24 to fill a winter engagement with Dockrill & Leon in Havana. In 1883 through 1885 he was again on the S. H. Barrett's Circus. In 1884 that show had a 120 round with 2-50's. In 1883 and 1884 he performed his principal act and also presented 4 and 7 horse acts. For the 1885 engagement at Central Park in San Francisco he was billed as the "world champion bareback rider, general athlete and universal genius of the arena." The year 1882 found him on 3 different shows. First, in February he was with Dockrill & Leon in Havana. In April he appeared on Cooper, Jackson & Co. Later he made the John Robinson's tour to California. He was there in July when he learned of his sister Emma's death in Detroit. At Oakland, California he and George Fisher were each fined \$50 for allowing Bob, Jr., a minor, to perform as a rider.

In honor of Stickney's great 6 horse act, George Southwell (1852-1916), bandmaster and composer, wrote the *Rob't Stickney's 6-Horse Galop*. It is attributed to the year 1886. This prolific composer of some 473 selections lived and spent most of his career in the Midwest. He established a music publishing business which was eventually moved to Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>3</sup>

At this point it might be appropriate to explain the general nature of a 6 or 8 horse act. In that presentation the rider was mounted on 2 horses in Roman style and at the same time drove 4 or 6 additional horses ahead of him in various formations on the hippodrome track. These 4 or 6 horses were attached to him by their reins only. They might precede him in single or double tandem or they might pass in single file under his legs and between the 2 horses on which he was riding in Roman style. They might also at times flank both sides of the pair of horses on which he was mounted.

After an announcement in February that Stickney would be on the Barrett show in 1886, he actually appeared on The United States Circus. That spring at McKeesport, Pa. while on that show he fell in the fast



finish portion of his principal act and dislocated his right arm. His untried new horse may have accounted for the accident.

The next season he presented his five horse act on Adam Forepaugh. Along with his niece, Crissie, Bob Stickney also did a principal act. Other principal riders were William Showles and William and Josie DeMott. In addition, that spring he was on the historic combination of the Barnum and Forepaugh shows in Madison Square Garden. In December he left Forepaugh to join Donovan's show in South America where the engagement extended into 1888. He was next on the Doris & Sullivan show for the regular tenting season of 1888, riding with Ella Stokes until that circus folded. In October he joined Gran Circo Estrellas del Nortis (Sturgis & Donovan) which opened in Panama. During a brief period of time in 1889, both Bob and Bob, Jr. were on Irwin Bros. Circus. For the 1889 season in South America, Sturgis & Donovan, which became Stickney & Donovan, engaged champion riders such as Charles Fish and Viola Rivers. The show closed unexpectedly on August 9, 1890 when the partnership of Stickney and Donovan was dissolved.

Bob Stickney went to the little known Rich & Mettie Circus in 1891. In 1892 after closing with Harper Bros. Circus, in the fall he worked at the West End Training Academy at Jersey City, New Jersey breaking a troupe of Shetland ponies and a somersaulting dog act. The next year he was manager of Pubillones Circus in Cuba and had a dog and trick horse act. Appearing on that circus was a young lady,

Emma Rezac (1876-1923), who did a wire and juggling act. At the age of 16 she had made her debut with John Robinson's Circus. On March 2, 1893 she married Robert Stickney. Quoting Stickney: "I never saw a girl that carried herself so polite and nicely as she did for the 3 months and the entire company was in love with her. I was so far smitten myself that one night I said that we would go down to Matanzas and have an American minister perform the ceremony, which we did the next day." <sup>4</sup>

That winter during the week of December 18 Stickney's highly educated

animals appeared at Proctor's Ladies' Club Theatre in New York City. In 1894 Bob with his new wife went to the Scribner & Smith Circus where he was the parade inspector, had his school of trick horses, trained ponies and dogs and rode manege on "Spot." On this show Emma began her manege riding. On January 13, 1895 they opened in Chicago with Frank Hall's Royal English Circus and German Water

the profession the most accomplished and daring lady rider of the day and one of the best wives and mothers that ever lived and I say that you cannot say anything too good about her." <sup>5</sup>

During their tenure on Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Bob was maitre de cirque and rode haute ecole with Anita Stirk (1904). Emma, in addition to her wire act, rode bareback with Dallie Julian as



*The Stickney & Donovan Circus  
at San Jose, Costa Rica 1897.*

The Stickney and Donovan Circus performers in 1897. Circus World Museum collection.

Carnival. While Emma performed on the slack wire, Robert presented his performing dogs and ponies.

The following year the Stickneys had a dog act and presented trick ponies on John Robinson's Circus. In December they sailed for Central America to appear with the Donovan show. In 1898 Bob Stickney with his wife and with Dollie Miller returned from South America and he sold his interest in Stickney and Donovan to his partner and brother-in-law, James Donovan. Early that spring Emma did trapeze and worked on the flying rings on Great Wallace.

Beginning later in 1899 and for a period of six seasons the Stickneys were on Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Circus. In 1900 Emma performed feats of balancing on the slender cable and gave an exhibition of equestrian skill as one of America's foremost women riders. At about this time Bob wrote: "My wife was two years asking me to teach her how to ride before I would attempt this undertaking. After hard practice and always close attention to duty she has made herself today without any peer in

one of a pair of "Queens of the Arena" (1902) and was a hurricane hurdle rider, one of the most hazardous forms of equestrianism. As "Empress of Equitation" in her principal riding, she was a worthy representative of a famous family, uniting the "beauty of face and form with the skill and abandon of an artist of blood and birth." <sup>6</sup> On a 1902 herald, Robert was described as being known around the world as one of the greatest equestrians of all time. In 1903 in Display #5, featuring female principal riders, Ouika Meers was in R-1, Julia Lowande and Nellie Ryland on 2 horses in R-2 rode a double bareback act and in R-3 Emma Stickney was featured in the grand bareback act. Also Display #11 presented 3 daring hurricane hurdle acts with Clara St. Leon (R-1), Emma Stickney (R-2) and Nellie Ryland (R-3). In addition to performing on Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Circus in the 1901 season, other events made that year a particularly busy one for them. In January Bob took out a dog and pony show. In October they performed old time riding acts, not performed for 2 seasons, as a feature of the Cincinnati Fall Festival Circus. On December 16 they began a three months engagement at Circus Busch in Berlin.



J. T. MacCadden's Great International Circus was in France in 1905. It will be recalled that MacCadden was a brother-in-law of James A. Bailey. Appearing in R#3 of Display #10 was Emma Stickney. From the official program for that show, a translation from the French describing her presentation is as follows: "The triumphant victress, recognized in equestrian circus rings world wide, guides with calm and authority two high spirited horses, sleek-coated and thick maned, reined in skillfully at the command of her hand." Another description of her act found in a second edition of the program hailed her riding as without rival on a bareback horse. After exhibiting in France for 3 months and 17 days, the show was attached on August 8 at Grenoble and seized by French officials. In early September the Stickneys left France to return home via Buenos Aires.

By 1906 the practice of women riding astride instead of sidesaddle was an innovation which the Great Wallace show publicized as a parade feature with their Bloomer Girl Brigade. The lady riders astride were Emma Stickney, Maude Earle, Sadie Conners, Florence Jarvis, Anita Faber and Marie Elsler.

For five circus seasons beginning in 1907, the Stickneys were featured on Ringling Bros. Circus. Robert rode manege, was a ringmaster and was one of 6 parade officers. (1910). Other officials were Charles Rooney and Jack Foley. Emma had a dog and pony act and did principal riding with runs, leaps and posturing as well as hurdle and jockey riding. Their salary ranged from \$100 to \$125 per week. For this amount both of them also had to go into tournament and parade and furnish their own horses. During this period, in 1908 Robert built a practice barn in Cincinnati where he would teach their daughter, Emily, the principal riding act. In December of the next year he secured property at 2527 Hackberry Street where he established winter quarters.

In the off-season, starting mid-December of 1910 until the following spring, the Royal & Adams Indoor show played Cleveland, Ohio. Among the riders on that production were Emma Stickney, the three Duttons, Chas. Seigrist, Austin King and Aldine Potter.

In April of 1912 Emma and Emily closed with the Polly of the Circus Co. Emily had also been there in 1911.



Great Wallace litho featuring Robert Stickney 1905. Circus World Museum collection.

When the company played Columbus, in the last act of the production Robert Stickney, Sr. officiated as the ringmaster while his daughter, Emily, "inheriting all of the circus art of her father and mother," did the riding. The fact that Bob was temporarily with the show was not publicized until late in the afternoon of the last day of the engagement. When this information did become known about the city, there was a stream of callers, revealing the fact that his graceful riding and unduplicated double somersaults over horses, elephants and camels decades ago on John Robinson's Circus were not forgotten.

During the month of May of 1912 Emma was on the Young Buffalo Wild West, giving a brilliant display of advanced methods for rapid hurdle riding. Later that season, she was in Oakland, California on Sells-Floto Circus riding bareback and doing hurdles. Sells-Floto's 1912 route book reported that on July 10 Mrs. Emma Stickney's horse had died at Pomeroy, Washington. "All are sorry for her." Robert, Emma and Emily were to be on Sells-Floto for the next two years, at least part of the time. In 1913 the two women were 2 of the 3 principal equestriennes on the show. Emily and Emma (R-2) were also members of Rhoda Royal's new

Mephistophelan equestrian number as well as were Homer and Estella Hobson (R-1) and Alex Lowande (R-3). Bob Stickney, Jr. was assistant to equestrian director Rhoda Royal. Emma also performed on the rolling globe. By this time their daughter, Emily, had developed into an exquisitely beautiful young bareback rider. In December of 1913 they joined Frank Spellman's Indoor Circus in December at Columbus, Ohio. By February 7 of the next year the family was home at Walnut Hills, Cincinnati. On February 16 they opened at the Hippodrome in Chicago and then moved on to St. Louis and Kansas City before jumping to Denver where they again joined Sells-Floto. On that show Robert Stickney was ringmaster while Emma was the prima donna of the arena and Emily did her principal act and was also in the party of Indians headed by Chief Strong Talk.

Emily and her husband, Tex McLeod, spent the winter with her folks in Cincinnati. They were busy every day practicing in the 40 foot ring barn. During the summer season Tex played the big rodeo contests in Washington, Oregon and Nevada.

During the three seasons that the Stickneys were on Sells-Floto, several significant events occurred on that show. In 1912 "Princess Alice" of the elephant herd gave birth to the first calf elephant ever born on American soil. Named "Baby Hutch", it became the most valuable elephant in the world. An extra fee was charged for viewing it and it earned \$1000 per day for Tammen and Bonfils. Two months later it fell ill and died at Pendleton, Oregon.

Through foreclosure in 1913 on a loan to Col. Buffalo Bill, Tammen and Bonfils got control of all of his property and the Colonel became a virtual chattel of Sells-Floto. During the winter months he would appear at the Denver Post's office each Saturday morning to greet the crowds of children who were on hand to hear his stories.

For the years 1914 and 1915 the title of the Circus was actually changed to "Sells-Floto-Buffalo Bill (Himself) Show." The old scout appeared in person at every performance and led a unique street parade that was suggestive of what would be seen in the arena, afternoon and evening. Buffalo Bill had a prominent part in the program, heading a spectacle entitled



"Warpath", which depicted frontier life in the Indian days.

Bandmaster Karl King had a 28 piece band on the show in 1914 and regularly played his composition, "Passing of the Red Man," dedicated to the star performer, Buffalo Bill Cody.

Emily performed on Barnum & Bailey for the summer seasons of 1915 and 1917. In 1915 Tex McCloud was one of the 5 cowboys and cowgirls who rode with Cy Compton's wild west roundup in Display #14.

In the latter part of November of 1915 Robert Stickney and his wife with Emily and the Correias sailed for Cuba to be with Circo Pubillones. Bob served as equestrian director and presented trick horses and dogs. The three Stickneys all rode manege. They returned home in 1916 after a 6 months engagement. Their letter head at that time contained simple line drawings of a principal bareback equestrienne, an Indian riding act and a lady and gentleman duo riding in the pas de deux. The wording was: The Stickneys, Equestrians, Robert Stickney, Sr., manager.

Robert and Emma were on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1917 where Emma (R #1) of Display #6 did jockey and wild west Indian riding opposite Frank Miller's notoriously reckless riding in R #3. In the center ring Emil Schweyer presented "Alice", the riding lion, in leaps through hoops of fire. In Display #15 Emma did her bareback riding opposite Dallie Julian and Frank Miller. Bob Stickney presented his usually fine high school and manege act. Closing with the show in October, they sailed from New Orleans to join Circo Pubillones in Cuba.

The early part of the 1918 season was spent at parks in Cincinnati and on the Sun Time with their comedy dog and pony circus. They also operated a riding academy. In September Bob and Emma again joined Hagenbeck-Wallace. Emily spent the summer at home taking care of her young son, Tex, Jr.

In 1919 Emily was on the Rhoda Royal Circus and her father and mother joined that show in September. All three members of the Stickney Family of riders continued there in 1920. They returned to their home in Cincinnati in January of 1921 from Montgomery, Alabama where some of the Rhoda Royal equipment was in quarters. Over the winter, Stickney left some of his horses at the Montgomery quarters, which occupied a former army camp. The



Emma Stickney on Ringling Bros. in 1910. Pfening Archives.

Stickneys were held over on Rhoda Royal for the 1921 season.

During the early spring of 1922 Uncle Bob, as he was now affectionately called, had a 4 week date with his dog and pony act with the Davis-Hock Indoor Circus at Springfield and Chicago, Illinois (Medinah Shrine) and at Salt Lake City. Although then 75 years of age, he returned home as spry as a kid. Stickney's Dog and Pony Circus played vaudeville during the summer of 1922, opening at Connersville, Indiana on May 19. The animals were shipped in crates and the circus was handled by Emma and Emily. Bob stayed in Cincinnati during the summer, presenting acts at Chester Park. In December Bob and Emma were enroute to Panama and

Emma and Emily on Sells-Floto in 1914. Pfening Archives.



Central America.

Returning to the United States in 1923 with their dog and pony act that had appeared on Saenz Bros. Circus, they next appeared at Dreamland Park in Newark, New Jersey. While in that city they took a 4 story apartment. On Sunday evening, June 24, with her husband and a grandchild in an adjoining room, Emma fell backwards out of a window into the street below. The screen went down with her. She lingered until July 6 when she expired. Her body was removed to the Stickney home on Hackberry Street, Cincinnati, where services were held three days later with interment in Spring Grove Cemetery. In addition to her immediate family, she was survived by her 90 year old mother.

In tribute to her it was said: "To know Emma Stickney was to esteem her highly, to admire and love her boundlessly. Possessed of business tact, she accomplished much outside her chosen life. The loss to her husband was most appalling." 7

In 1923, the year of her mother's death, Emily was performing on John Robinson's Circus. In connection with her father, she then managed an attraction of a large South American snake with its young, "Queenie and her 44 Babies." In 1925 Bob Stickney had this feature as part of the Tip Top #1 Shows, which played in Philadelphia the week of May 4 on the same lot with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Meanwhile, in Miami, Florida on March 14 Emily had married George H. McSparron, bandmaster, formerly of the E. Dykman-Joyce Shows and other outdoor amusement companies. The preceding winter he had been directing special engagements in Florida. After her marriage to McSparron, Emily went on the road with her snakes to play celebrations, fairs and special events.

In 1926 although still very active, Bob disposed of his Cincinnati property and moved to Florida to be with Emily.

On February 24, 1928 Robert Theodore Stickney died in Miami at the home of his daughter. His body was taken back to Cincinnati and buried in Spring Grove Cemetery. One of the most colorful pad riders and also 4 horse riders of his day, he was an expert at doing forward and backward somersaults on the pad. Two very moving tributes were made to his memory at the time of his death. "Great pad rider, he brought to the circus arena the Greek



ideal of physical beauty. In his best days he was a fine sight on a horse." "Door is forever closed on the last or the riding gladiators of the old school. He's gone to join his old pals of old pad rooms and training barns--Jim Robinson, Billy Dutton and Johnny Wilson."<sup>8</sup> And so the old training barn on Hackberry Street became a circular garage.

In May of 1930 Emily returned to the circus ring on the Lewis & Zimmerman Circus and she was on Bud Anderson's Jungle Oddities in June of that year. On Lewis & Zimmerman she was one of six manege riders and did a principal act along with May Lewis. Emily had not ridden as a bareback equestrienne for several years, but she did the principal act as well as she ever did and received a good hand from the audience. On Jungle Oddities, Max Gruber and Emily operated the riding mechanic for happy local boys and girls.

#### **Robert John Danville Stickney (1872-1941)**

Robert D. Stickney's circus career began very early in his life. In 1876 his appearance with his father on John Robinson's Circus was greeted with more than the usual enthusiasm. When he alighted on the ring carpet and sang his little song, the delight of the audience showed that he was the pet of the arena. Serving an apprenticeship under his father, he became a very proficient principal and 4 horse rider as well as a trainer of horses. In both 1888 and 1889 he was with his father, first in South America on James Donovan and Co. and then, in the latter year, on Irwin Bros. Circus. Both he and his wife-to-be, Louise De Mott (circa 1873-1946), appeared on John Robinson's Circus in 1891 and 1892. In fact, she had been an equestrienne on that show as early as 1888. She rode manege and was a champion principal rider. She was the daughter of James Demott and Josephine Tourniaire and the granddaughter of Madame Louise Tourniaire. Also, she was a younger sister of Josie De Mott Robinson (1868-1948) and a niece of Mollie Brown (1860-1924), who was a half sister of her mother. You will recall that Mollie Brown was reputed to be the first woman to throw

a somersault on a bareback horse and that Josie De Mott was the second woman to perform the backward somersault.

Robert Stickney in 1892 appeared as a thrilling hurricane bareback rider on John Robinson. While he continued on that show through 1894, Louise went over to Cook & Whitby Circus (Ben Wallace) in 1893. Here she again rode high school and did a beautiful principal act. On May 27 of that year she married Robert D. Stickney. This was the same year in which his father married Emma Rezac.

Bob and Louise were then together on John Robinson's Circus each year from 1894 through 1900 except for 1898. In the spring of 1894 Robert practiced with the ring stock and an equestrian dog in winter quarters at Terrace Park and he bought a ring horse from George Holland for use in his somersault act. During that season Louise rode her hurricane bareback act and presented an equestrian curriculum of educated ponies which was the admiration and wonder of all.

In 1895 they moved from John Robinson's Circus to Bentley Bros. which they joined on August 31 as principal riders. In addition, Bob did a somersault riding act.

In that year their son, Robert Louis Stickney, was born.



Robert D. and Louise Stickney with son on John Robinson in 1899. Pfening Archives.

Back on John Robinson in the spring of 1896, Robert was equestrian director and offered a variety of feature acts which included his bareback riding with championship vaulting and somersaulting, an equestrian canine and a troupe of clever trick ponies. Louise presented her wonderful and beautiful sidesaddle feats. For the years 1896 and 1897 the John Robinson title was changed to John Robinson & Franklin Bros. Circus. Bob and Louise were there in 1897, both doing their riding specialties. Robert was assistant manager and director general on the show in 1899 and 1900. Also, both were riders in 1899 and the next year Louise rode her famous cake walking horse, "Indio." In that year Robert also served as equestrian director.

Robert D. Stickney and Charles F. Robinson opened the Robinson & Stickney Dog and Pony Show on May 25 1901 in Cincinnati. It was under an 85 round plus 1-40 and had 1000 seats. On July 20 it was sold at auction at Parkersburg, West Virginia for \$1090. A suit had been brought against Stickney by Robinson in a procedure to dissolve the partnership. That fall Louise rode a manege horse at the Cincinnati Fall Festival. In appreciation for her fine presentation, she was given a beautiful white Italian greyhound.

Hargreaves' Circus, a six car railroad show, was in its 4th year of existence in 1902 when Bob Stickney and his wife joined, he as a principal and hurdle rider and she as a manege equestrienne. They couldn't stay longer than the first week of the season because they were under contract with Stevens and Boyle, which opened in Astoria, Long Island, New York, on June 9 to play parks and pleasure resorts. They rejoined Hargreaves on July 5 after Stevens & Boyle folded on June 17. The Stickneys continued on Hargreaves in 1903 after Bob in January had organized a circus for a Cincinnati riding club.

The year 1904 was spent in Mexico City with Orrin Bros. Circus. For the next two seasons they were riders on The Great Wallace Circus. In 1905 Bob was featured on a lithograph as a spectacular somersault bareback rider. The next year he was assistant equestrian director under the veteran Charles H. Sweeney, the originator of the whirlwind races, a feature that made the Great Wallace hippodrome known everywhere. That year the big top was a 160 round plus 4-50's.

James A. Bailey died in April of 1906. In October of 1907 the Ringlings purchased the Barnum & Bailey Circus and the following year was the first full season under the new management. The Stickneys were there on the show in both 1907 and 1908 during this change of ownership.

In 1907 Louise reached a new prominence in her exquisitely charming cart act, driving a blooded pedigreed roadster on the track. She also presented a beautiful dog and pony act in which, in a display of equine and canine intelligence, the dogs rode on the ponies. Bob Stickney was in a graceful double high school riding act with Josephine Koubeck. On the same program Louise's sister, Josie DeMott Robinson, rode a bareback somersault act.

For 1908 many of the equestrian acts



came in Display # 7. "Here came the high-steppers and the cake walkers. In the rings were Madame Belle Clark and Miss C. Sebestion, mounted on well trained performers, which knew their business and cues; Mme E. Wulff, in the regulation riding costume, on a black beauty that quivered with excitement and eagerness to go through his paces according to the whims of the bandmaster, who played waltzes, marches, quicksteps, cakewalks and Oriental music. The horse knew them all, and ably coached by his attractive rider, showed off to excellent advantage. Miss Rose Huettermann (Guillitti) and Robert Stickney, high school riders, were familiar with all the tricks necessary to bring out the show form of their mounts. On the track exhibitions were given by Louise Stickney, in white and seated in a white cart, drawn by a white horse, which drew the cart around in circles and ellipses, reared, knelt and posed admirably under the wise handling of the driver, and Herr Edward Wulff, who rode a side-stepper that paraded up and down, displaying his repertory of fancy work without fear or favor. Herr Wulff has trained this performer to perfection and handled him with great skill. In conclusion the riders paraded their horses around the ring midst great applause." <sup>9</sup>

In Display #11 entitled child-land delights, Louise presented ponies ridden by the cutest of dogs.

In an interview with Harriet Quimby at Madison Square Garden when Barnum & Bailey was playing there, here is an interesting account concerning Louise Stickney. This article was published in *Leslie's Weekly* for April 16, 1908. "The youthful appearance of all circus celebrities never fails to elicit a word of astonishment. A girl of apparently nineteen is accompanied by one that looks eighteen, yet they are mother and daughter. Circus women grow up until they are twenty, then they stop, not counting birthdays. 'How do you do it?' was asked petite Louise Stickney, who does a little-girl act with a white pony. 'Life in the open air and constant exercise, I suppose,' she explained, with a pretty flush of appreciation.

Despite the childish appearance of this little woman, Mrs. Stickney is the proud mother of a ten-year-old boy, whom she and her husband are keeping far from the circus. He is attending school and, when his education is more advanced, they hope that he will develop talent for the legitimate. It is the bright star of all circus people that their children will enter the legitimate—a hope that is too often foiled, for there is more in inheritance than in training and it is difficult for a child of parents who have spent their lives in the ring not to have a love for the glitter and excitement, and for the smell of the sawdust."



Robert D. Stickney, assistant manager of John Robinson in 1900. Pfening Archives.

In hopes of receiving an engagement with the Ringling organization for 1909, Bob Stickney wrote the following letter: <sup>10</sup> New York, Jan. 9, 1909

"Mr. Al Ringling  
Baraboo, Wis.

"Dear Sir: It is rumored here that the Sells-Forepaugh show is to go out next season under your management and if such is the case I would be pleased to arrange with you for myself and wife to furnish the following acts:

"1 Novelty buggy manege act—horse, harness, buggy and ladies costume all white. This is without a doubt the most attractive and best trained act of its kind before the public and always makes good. The act is replete with novel and original tricks. You will probably recall the act as being the hit of the manege number with the Barnum-Bailey show the last two seasons.

"2 Novelty Pony and Dog number. This act is also performed by lady. It is an unusually clever act, unlike all others and the animals work with vim and ginger. In this number I do a very funny comedy bit on stilts with long arms.

"3 I am an Equestrian Director of ability and can handle any size show. I can also ride manege act on company's horse, arrange and take charge of manege numbers.

"Kindly advise me if you can use the above services and oblige.

Respt.

Robt. Stickney, Jr.  
46 W. 22nd St. New York"

The following prompt reply was received. <sup>11</sup>

"Baraboo, Wis. Jan. 14, '09  
Mr. Robert Stickney, Jr.  
New York, N. Y.

"Dear Sir:

"The Forepaugh-Sells show does not go out until season 1910. As to the Ringling show, we have all of our manege and high-school acts engaged so could not place you to advantage at this time, but hope to hear from you in the future.

"Yours truly, Al Ringling."

In February of 1909 the injunction proceedings instituted by Carl Hagenbeck of Hamburg, Germany restraining Wallace from using the Hagenbeck name were compromised and the suit was dismissed from the courts. Hagenbeck-Wallace opened on May 1 at Peru, Indiana, going out on 45 railroad cars. Bob and Louise were on the roster of performers.

Louise, by now one of the best known performers in the circus world, made a decided hit as she entered the arena dressed all in white, seated in a high 4 wheeled buggy drawn by a milk white horse with a cake walking white dog underneath. On cue the horse would rear up on his hind legs and the audience always rewarded the act with hearty applause. She also had her dog and pony act.

Bob Stickney, Jr. was horse trainer and the new equestrian director on the show. Charles H. Sweeney, old attaché of the Wallace show and equestrian director, had disappeared from the staff with the many changes inaugurated that season. Sweeney had been around the Wallace show when it did not amount to much. He had come to Peru with Jim Anderson and had helped build the first wagons, played in the band, performed as a clown, carried water for the elephants and finally assumed the role of performance director. However, in 1908 Sweeney and Col. Wallace had a difference of opinion on money matters. Sweeney understood that he would be paid extra for working the little elephant in one display on the stage. Wallace claimed that Sweeney had been paid in full for this act.

Bob Stickney's troupe of marvelous equines, technically known as manege horses, accomplished much more than the ordinary high school horse. If there was anything in the way of haute école they did



not perform with ease, it had not yet been discovered. In addition to being horse trainer and equestrian director, Bob rode in a duo presentation of saddle horses with Ida Miaco in R-3. Anita Connors, in a duo presentation with Louise, drove a second beautiful steed on the track. Madame Bedini with her husband, Sir Victor Bedini or at times with Mary Connors (Rudy Rudynoff's sister), presented high school horses in the center ring.

In 1910 Louise performed a beautiful novelty driving act at the New York Hippodrome.

After declining to be arena director for Sells-Floto in 1911, Bob with his wife went on the vaudeville circuit. They had bookings at Keith's Theater in Providence, Rhode Island until the middle of May.

In September of 1913 the Stickneys sent out another letter seeking employment for the next season. They offered the high school buggy manege act, horse, buggy and trappings all in white, and a novel dog and pony act, both to be presented by Louise. Bob could ride a high school horse, to be furnished by the company, and was also a competent equestrian director.<sup>12</sup>

As it turned out, they again received an engagement on Hagenbeck-Wallace for 1914. Louise drove the white manege horse in the buggy on the track. The horse from time to time would stand erect on his hind legs. This presentation was one of the highest class acts on the show.

Other manege riders that year were Nettie Carrol with horse in buggy on the track; riders of manege horses under saddle on the track included Gladys Gorman, wife of the equestrian director, Bud Gorman, Miss Stella Coyle and Miss Bertha Rounds; double manege acts were presented by Mons. and Mme Bedini and by Capt. Ray O'Wesney and wife, Lola. Miss Milvo drove a manege elephant in harness on the track. Bob Stickney appeared in a double manege act with Miss Harris. Stella Coyle, wife of Joe Coyle, the clown, was to lose her life in the tragic 1918 train wreck on Hagenbeck-Wallace in Indiana.

Although she was not then riding a principal act, it was sometimes mentioned in news accounts that Louise Stickney was one of the few women who could once ride a bareback act in street clothes. Also, it



Louise DeMott Stickney on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1909. Pfening Archives.

was pointed out that she was unique among women riders as a trainer of her own horses.

In 1914 Bob was assistant to the co-equestrian directors, Bud Gorman and Fred Fisher. He also appeared in a double manege act with Miss Harris.

In 1914 Hagenbeck-Wallace was a large show. The big top was a 160 plus 3-50's and 2-40's and the menagerie was a 90 plus 5-40's. It traveled on 52 railroad cars. The street parade was described as a "dream of beauty."

As late as March 30, 1918 the Stickneys were contemplating a show of their own for that season but it did not materialize. Instead, Bob and Louise joined the Barnum and Bailey Circus at its Washington, D. C. date, May 6 to 8, with their manege act, ponies and dogs.

The last record of a regular circus season for this distinguished couple was in 1920 when they appeared on the 50 car Sells-Floto Circus. In display #14 Louise presented riding dogs and later in the Children's Own Number, she was proclaimed a society horsemwoman with the smartest posing harness equine in America.

In January of 1923 Bob and his wife were living in North Platte, Nebraska. He was breaking high school and trick horses for a big dealer in that city. Ten years later he was operating a Phillips 66 station at Fifth and Keo Way in Des Moines, Iowa.

In the meanwhile by 1926 their son, Robert Louis Stickney, had become quite adept at dancing the Charleston on stilts. Also in July of that year at the Pantages Indoor Circus in Kansas City he headed the clown band of 8 as well as did stilt walking. The following year he was a stilt dancer in Paris. When Charles A.

Lindbergh landed there in May of 1927, he was chosen to present one of the acts that entertained the famous airman.

In 1941 Robert D. Stickney suffered a stroke at his home in Des Moines. He died about a month later. His wife, Louise, died of a heart attack in Des Moines on July 24, 1946. She had lived in Des Moines for 14 years. After 1920 and up until 1938 she had trained horses, ponies and dogs for presentations at vaudeville houses and for shows in parks and fairs. She was survived by her son, Robert, of Des Moines and 2 sisters, Josie DeMott of New York and Mrs. Camille Doering of Philadelphia.

#### Conclusion

Bridging the gap between the customary mid-19th century principal and manege riding acts and the large 20th century family groups, the Stickneys stood at the pinnacle in grace and perfection. Their presentations and performances reflected a rare professionalism that embodied both consummate practice and talent.

#### Notes

1. Thayer, Stuart, Memorandum on Samuel Peckhill Stickney (Circus World Museum)
2. *Billboard*, December 10, 1921, p. 100
3. Author's correspondence with Douglas Mac Leod, Librarian of Windjammers Unlimited, Inc.
4. *Billboard*, June 15, 1912, p. 42
5. *Billboard*, June 15, 1912, p. 42
6. Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Herald for 1902 (Circus World Museum)
7. *Billboard*, August 4, 1923, p. 78
8. *Billboard*, March 10, 1928, p. 89
9. *New York Clipper*, March 28, 1908, p. 166
10. Stickney, Robert, Jr., Correspondence with Al Ringling, January 9, 1909 (Circus World Museum)
11. Ringling, Al, Correspondence with Robert Stickney, Jr., January 14, 1909 (Circus World Museum)
12. Stickney, Robert, Jr., Correspondence with Al Ringling, September 26, 1913 (Circus World Museum)

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- Sturtevant, C. G., *The Stickney Family*, White Tops, April May 1938, p. 3
- Traber, J. Milton, *The Stickney Family*, *Billboard*, June 15, 1912, p. 17



# Oldtime Circus Fixers Legal Adjusters

By C. A. "Red" Sonnenberg

There have been all kinds of circus fixers, good bad and indifferent--so the only ones that I will dwell upon are those in my estimation who were the Crème D'La Crème who I have either trouped with or known of both on the Sunday School shows and the Rootin' Tootin' grifters of the past.

Around gift circuses the legal adjuster was also called "the mender, the patch, the fix and the man."

Of course some of the legal adjusters graduated from the ranks of the Rootin' Tootin' to the Sunday School shows and vice versa.

One such was the great legal adjuster was Herbert "Judge" Duval, the Judge as he was affectionately called by all who knew was a native of Little Rock, Arkansas. The Judge before going on to "Big Bertha" had a career with such Rootin' Tootin' grifting outfits as the Mugivan-Ballard Howes Great London, the J. H. Eschman Circus, out of St. Paul and the Ben Austin-Jake Newman Gentry Bros. in 1921 All of them being 24 caret grifters, all having the Pastimes and Amusements of the old west in the side show.

In the fall of 1947 when John Ringling North and Art Concello regained control of "Big Bertha" I had the privilege of being the assistance to the Judge.

The Judge and I had many a laff together--he used to crack to me "Red this winter you and I in Sarasota are gonna dig-up some O.P.M. (other peoples money) and see what we can promote with it."

After the grifters were on the way out Duval joined Claude Webb's Russell Bros. and the Tom Mix Circus, both Sunday School shows. Before winding up his long career as an adjuster with "Big Bertha" he was the representative of Ringling-Barnum for all of the claims that arose out of the Hartford fire in 1944. After the Judge retired on his laurels every winter nearly every night he



Carl August "Red" Sonnenberg. All photographs are from the Pfening Archives.

would drive up in his Caddy to Heritage Acres in front of the Sarasota Hotel and cut it up with the boys for a couple hours. Whenever he was on the show lot he would have a bunch of tickets. And at tear down that night as the big top was rolled up thousands of tickets were also rolled in with the canvas. So at the next stand which was Gainesville, Texas the big top when in the air looked like Stars Over Bethlehem

Herbert "Judge" Duval.



as the tickets ate their way out of the canvas. he would also

Later on in showing in Miami, we had 'em on the straw at the first matinee when the performance was about over a big rain hit and with all of those in the top it leaked like a sieve. So hundreds of folks came out to the front door demanding their money back. So instead of giving their money back as they has seen over half of the performance the Judge and myself were working tickets for another performance. As we were doing this some gal was holler-ing loudly she wanted her money back, which the Judge and I played the "iggy." Out of a clear sky she belted me right smack dab in the kisser with her poke and I wound up with the nicest shiner ever and the Judge never did stop laughing for a couple of days and he would crack "Red that girl sure packed wallop in that poke didn't she," and he would start to laugh all over again. I have always wondered if that gal thought I had ate all of those holes in the big top.

Noyelles Burkhart, who followed the Judge after he retired as adjuster with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, was one of the best Sunday school adjusters that I had the privilege of trouping with.

Noyelles was a graduate of Zack Terrell's Cole Bros. Circus. He had been manager for several years. Zack always had plenty of gift with his show.

In his spare time while with the big show Noyelles would study the law, and he passed the bar examination in the State of Georgia.

The fixer with Terrell's Cole show was Joe Haworth, one of the top men with a gift circus. Another was Gordon Calvit who I trouped with on Gentry Bros. and the Walter L. Main Circus in the 1920s. Calvit while with the Gentry show was having a very minor beef with an obnoxious lady who finally said to Gordon, "If



you were my husband I would feed you poison, Madam Gordon calmly chirped up "if I was your husband I would take it."

Gordon at one time was married to the daughter of Lillian Russell the international musical comedy star.

I remember when we would be walking to the lot from the train the Hi-Sheriff or the Chief of Police of the town we would be playing would stop us and ask "Is Mister Calvit with you this year." And the chief or sheriff would then crack "very nice fella Mr. Calvit." The reason they said that was because when Gordon Calvit came to town with a circus it would be payday for the officials.

Gordon was the inventor of Shoo Fly. Bill Colp his assistant would invite all of the troublemakers and knockers to have a Coke with a little Shoo Fly in it and that would be the end of Mister Pokey Nose or Mister Coattail Puller for the day.

Calvit went to his reward in 1928 on November 20 in Quincy, Florida while on tour with Floyd King's Gentry Bros. Circus. At the time he was married to Naida Miller, one of the better wire walkers.

Some of the great fixers were with the Mugivan, Ballard and Bower's American Circus Corporation shows that had grift with them, such as Howes Great London, Sanger Bros., Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sells-Floto, Gollmar Bros., John Robinson. Some of these later were Sunday School shows.

They included Bill Kellogg with Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1920, 1922 and 1923. He was later with Joe Haworth on Terrell's Cole Bros. George Ryan was also with Hagenbeck-Wallace and Howes Great London. Ryan also ran a gambling house in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Warren Irons was with the Hagenbeck from 1913 to 1916 and John Robinson show. Irons later ran burlesque theaters in Chicago and Detroit. Billy Miles was on John O. Talbott's Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. In 1921 he was killed by a Deputy Sheriff in Earle, Arkansas, who was murdered later by boxcar thieves on the Cotton Belt Railway.

George Ross was on Howes Great London and Gentry Bros. in 1924. Charlie Hagaman was also on



Noyelles Burkhardt.

Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1914 and 1915. George Steele was fixer on the Howes show in 1915, Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace. Steele continued with the Floto show after the American Circus Corporation declared the joints were off after 1923. Louie Tillman was manager and fixer of the Howes show. Tillman was murdered in Dunnville, Ontario by a character called Hamberger Joe on May 20, 1920.

James Condon was an assistant to Steele on the Floto show. Condon's wife was in the car when in Vancouver, Washington on September 20, 1921 when they stuck up the Sells-Floto show and got about \$30,000.

Frank Gavin assistant with John Robinson and checker of the joints. Gavin later had the privileges with Floto and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch.

Louie Chase was Bill Kellogg's assistant on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1920 and was the checker of joints. Chase was later manager of George Washington Christy's Lee Bros. Circus.

J. B. McMahon was assistant to George Ryan on the Hagenbeck show and was later fixer with the Ranch show. His father was killed while he had the McMahon Circus out of Delavan, Wisconsin. J. B. himself was found dead in an alley in Chicago in 1933.

Frank McGuyer was the fixer of

the John Hogg show (John Robinson) in 1923, but then it was a Sunday School operation. The route book had this to say about Frank, "He was the world's champion license cutter of the circus world." McGuyer later was with the Mighty Haag Circus for many years.

Nosey Schwab was a little fella, but had a real big schnoz. He was with Walter L. Main and also was assistant to Joe Haworth on Cole Bros. He also ran a hotel in Bethel, Ohio on the Ohio River. When he was with Floyd King's Cole Bros. in 1930 we played some town in Western Texas that had a very exorbitant reader (license) that the movie theater people has put on the books to keep circuses outta town.

So Nosey went to see the City Clerk, who happened to be a great lover of the circus, so he had the clerk issue a reader for a Chautauqua, which was only \$5.00 a day. The next day the local newspaper had this say to say under the heading, "Will a grapefruit under any other name still be a squirt in your eye." Then the editor went on to describe the Chautauqua that showed there yesterday—saying the only lecture he herd was by the man in front of the side show—the only music was by a loud brass band—the only singing was by a lady called a Prima Donna in the spec—the only magic performed was by a clever fella in the side show with three shells and one lil'ol pea. The only classical dancers he noted were three ladies in the annex of the side show, who the talker said would do the Hootchie Kootchie--Rootie-the Giddy Glide and the Razzmatazz and that they would shake their bellies like a bowl of jelly on a cold and frosty morn. And that they just did that, but he said that he greatly enjoyed the Cole Bros. World Toured Chautauqua very much. And he noted that more Chautauquas like this one would come more often.

Then he added a P. S. which said it was the first Chautauqua that he ever attended that had a wild animal act. We had Terrell Jacobs and his fighting lions.

Bow Robinson was another great adjuster with Christy Bros. Circus a long time. He started in the biz as a



ticket seller with Sells-Floto.

Chew Tobacco Ryan was with Lee Bros. and as assistant to Bow with the Christy show. Harry Seymour was with Andrew Downie's Walter L. Main show.

Williard Mackenstoe was with "Catfish" Bob Steven's Bailey Bros. Circus. Willard came from "Washington Courthouse, Ohio, where many a showman came from. Willard's brother Lou had Gargantua, the big gorilla that John Ringling North made famous when he changed his name from Buddy to Gargantua. Lou had Gargy at the Chicago Century of Progress in 1933 at the Gorgilla Village, but he was then he was just another monkey called Buddy.

Frank "Kokomo" Anders was with various King brothers Rootin' Tooters.

Bill Moore was with Christy Bros., Mighty Haag and Clyde Beatty shows. He continued with Beatty when it was a Sunday School circus.

"Whitey" Crosset and "Whitey" Chapman were with the Andrew Downie Walter L. Main show. Crosset started in the circus business as a trainmaster. Willie Hennesey was with Gentry-Patterson.

D. T. "Kid" Bartlett was another great adjuster with Christy's Lee Bros. Circus in 1925 and 1926. He was with the ill-fated Tim McCoy Wild West in 1938.

"Himi" Adams was mostly with smaller shows, but he put in a season with Walter L. Main. He was also with M. L. Clark and Elmer Jones' two car Cooper Bros. outfit.

Howard Y. Bary, who operated the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1937 and 1938, was an adjuster with the King brother's Walter L. Main in 1925 and Lee Bros. in 1926.

Bill Hays with John Robinson and Walter L. Main as assistant to Nosey Schwab. Hays came from Mason City, Iowa where in 1930 he was burned to death.

Some of the best Sunday School adjusters who I knew or trouped with were Herb Duval, Noyelles Burkhart and Frank Cook with "Big Bertha." Charlie Cook was with Al G. Barnes. Al Beck was with Seils-Sterling. He also put in a season or two with Duval on Ringling-Barnum.



Gordon Calvit.

Judge John Kelly was with the Charlie Sparks show for a number of years.

Kelly came from Philadelphia, and is not to be confused with John Kelly of Baraboo, Wisconsin of Ringling and Ringling-Barnum fame.

Eddie Vaughn was with Miller Bros. 101 Ranch and wound up his career as assistant to Frank Cool on the big show.

Ralph Clauson was with the American Circus Corporation as well as Ringling-Barnum. Harry Seymour and Owen Doud were with the Ranch show. C. B. "Butch" Fredericks was also with Sparks.

Frank Gentry, brother of H. B. was the adjuster with the Gentry Dog and Pony outfit for many years.

One of the main functions of a Sunday School adjuster was to get

Joe Haworth.



the reader cut down to a size that the show could live with.

Many a small show adjuster would get the reader cut down to about \$5.00 a day. It was surprising what a few free passes could do.

In all my years of trouping I don't believe that I ever heard of a local official buying and paying for a ticket, and that included his family.

Two of the worst states were Texas and Louisiana. The worst cities were New Orleans and Philadelphia. In Philly the police had several tables where they ate in the cookhouse. The states that would have the least shakedown artists would have to be the Middle West states. While playing Sterling, Illinois on July 27, 1953 with the Ringling-Barnum show we had two turn-a-ways. The show's chief of police, Bill Reynolds that day gave out only 17 passes, where as in most cities it would have been in the hundreds.

Years ago most cities wanted the circus to play their towns. It brought plenty of folks to town to see the show. On the other hand in some cases it also brought circus thieves that included pick pockets and even people that would raid close lines of people away from home watching the parade.

Many years ago while Al Butler was contracting Ringling-Barnum to show Norfolk, Nebraska, he got the local Chamber of Commerce to pay for the reader, and also the rent on the lot. When circus day arrived the show had two turn-a-ways. So when the C of C people came to pay Charles Ringling a visit they said, "Give it to a local charity. The Big Show did not have to pass the hat as it always at that time had plenty of hay in the barn, which made a difference.

I just remembered a couple of other country adjusters. "Kid" Hunt, who was also a nut spieler and broad tosser helped with the mending of the Rhode Royal Circus in the early 1920s. Hunt later had his own colored minstrel show for a long time.

Bill Campbell, one of the partners in the Campbell Bailey & Hutchinson Circus helped with mending on his show. He was also an assistant to Nosey Schwab with the Walter L. Main Circus in 1928. Bill came from Evansville, Wisconsin.





**“Compulsively readable.”**

—*Publishers Weekly*



# THE Circus AGE

*Culture and Society  
under the American  
Big Top*

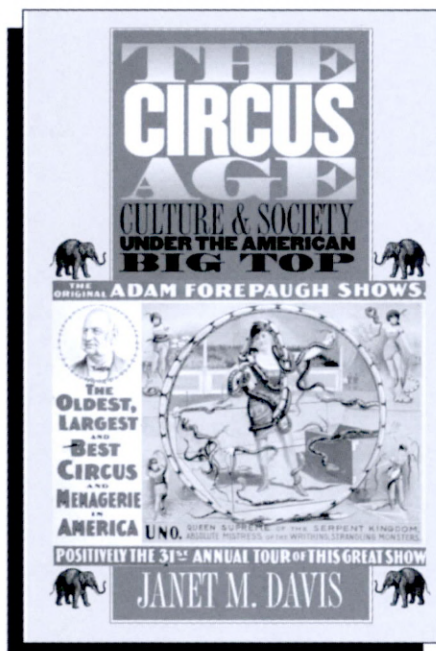
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# Frank A. Robbins

## a most successful failure

### PART FIFTEEN

By Robert Sabia

#### 1912 - meet me in St. Louis

Back in industrial Jersey City, once again Frank A. Robbins had the challenge of routing his circus through the maze of omnipresent competition, quite possibly in territory where his fine circus was unknown to the public. Making the challenge even more difficult was the troubling reality that he did not personally know the towns and villages to be visited and had to rely on advice of friends in the business to create a viable tour. Meanwhile he also had the task of readying his circus for the onrushing season. In this regard he had already accomplished some of the work by purchasing much needed replacement cages and baggage wagons in late November 1911 at the auction of the Famous Robinson Shows. These acquisitions were to be integrated into the wagon count shortly. For whatever reason, the uptown wagon was not going to be on the show this season; it being offered for sale in a *Billboard* ad (1/6/12). It is unclear how this wagon was used. It is believed that it transported the miniature horse, perhaps sold show tickets and may have also served as a stock vehicle which warehoused and dispensed circus related trinkets sold by circus street vendors during the parade. The wagon was described to be the finest such wagon in the country, 20 feet long and opened to a width of 14 feet. It was

claimed to be fully operational within 7 minutes. Berths identical to a Pullman car were built into the wagon. It seems this wagon was privately owned and probably operated as a privilege.

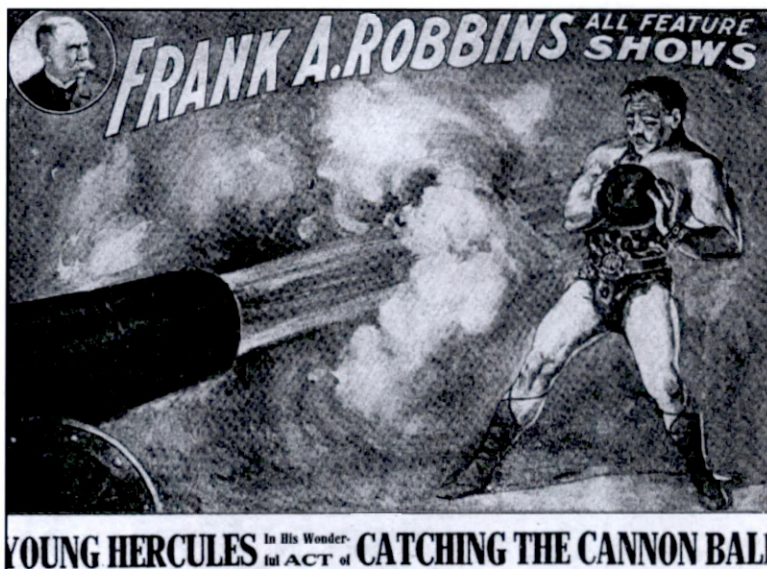
Coming out of the Jersey City winter quarters was a steady flow of press releases regarding the preparations underway. Some of this information was true and some just press nonsense. Often it is difficult to tell the difference; in other situations the nonsense was so blatant that laughter must have been the order of the day in the mind of the press agent. In the January 13 *New York Clipper*, it was noted there were now 25 cages on the show. New animals were being purchased including an ostrich and a rhea already on-board.

When added to the existing cas-

Frank A. Robbins Circus lithograph used in 1912. Circus World Museum collection.

sowary and an emu, there was an excellent display of running birds. There was also a mention of several additions to the wax gallery of statues of greats and near greats. The next week the *Clipper* had a news item, which referred to the outstanding business being done the previous year (?), being the basis of enlarging the show to 24 cars, and having two rings and a stage. This press release bordered on being ridiculous. Far from being enlarged in 1912, there is some historians believe that the show was actually cut from 15 to 13 cars. More on this later. On February 24, both the *Clipper* and the *Billboard* presented essentially the same press release. It went on to state that "... (t)he entire outfit will be practically new, canvas, wagons, etc. Mr. Robbins has already place his order for his canvas, which is to be delivered April 1. The new horse tents will be something entirely new, an original idea of Mr. Robbins, and

promises to entirely eliminate the difficulties now experienced with the old style horse tops. The menagerie will be one of the features this season. The cross cages will be done away with, and new large open dens will take their place, and will contain many new animals not usually seen in the smaller menageries. In addition to last year's collection a new five-pole top, will be used for the menagerie the coming season. A new 76 ft. car will replace the 'Mattie'





and has arrived at the shops of the Pennsylvania R.R. for a few alterations. Mr. Robbins' new private car, 'The Governor' is in the vernacular of all who have seen it, 'the classiest thing they have seen.' It is 70 feet long, steel body, with two staterooms, reception room and



buffet compartment, elaborately decorated inside and out. Jack Cousins, equestrian director, has been busy all winter breaking in some new horse acts, and says he will six jet black high school horses this season, whose equal the public have never seen. Mr. Robbins has ordered special trappings for these acts, as well as wardrobe. In addition to breaking these high school horses, two four-horse acts have been broken--four grays and four roans. Charles Lowry, famous hurdle rider, will ride the grays, while Jack Cousin, himself will ride the roans. The fact that Jack has personally broken these acts is sufficient guarantee that they will be the best. About forty head of stock will be added this year, making total one hundred and fifty."

The *Clipper* of March 16th noted that "... already a long string of red wagons fill March Avenue, the street that runs along the side of the Frank A. Robbins winter quarters, ready to be loaded. The show will move to the lot April 20 next. The Furst Store, the largest department store in Jersey City, has a big display of animals (from Frank A. Robbins Circus) on the third floor, free for visitors. As one enters Jersey City, on the P.R.R., the long string of yellow cars attracts everybody's attention. It is the consensus of opinion that their equal does not exist."

However, he did have excess wagons about and he was doing his best to sell them. In his "Call" ad in the *Billboard* of April 5th, he offered the H-W bandwagon and a stringer wagon obviously purchased at the auction as they could be seen in Indianapolis. He had a ticket wagon and baggage wagon gear for sale to be seen at Jersey City. Although it is not clear at this time whether

Bandwagon acquired from the Danny Robinson Circus on Robbins in 1912. Circus World Museum collection..

Robbins intended to return to Jersey City at the conclusion of the season. If he did not, he had appropriate motivation to clear the quarters of accumulated circus related material. Reasons aside, the season was about to begin and Frank A. and his colleagues were ready for it.

The executive cadre for the Bergen Amusement Co. remained strong and relatively intact from the previous season. In addition to Robbins who acted both as the show's manager and part-time railroad contractor, John Henry Rice continued as general agent, local contractor and also part-time railroad contractor; Charles Farrell, treasurer (repeater); Milton Robbins, auditor (a new role); Arthur Keane and Charles Dale, special agents; William Sands, contracting press agent; Dr. J. D. Gordon, press agent with show (repeater); H. H. Sylvester, excursion agent (former year repeater); Jack Cousins, equestrian director (repeater); Ray Anders (man of all seasons) general superintendent (repeater); Joe Hughes and Billy Cavanaugh, privileges (repeaters); Tom Barton, superintendent of tickets (repeater); Frank Howard, canvas boss (Doc Parkhurst--long term canvas boss died during the winter at the age of 49); Frank Wallace, trainmaster; Charles Evans, boss hostler; Frank Anders (father of Ray Anders and father-in-law of Winnie Robbins) Superintendent of Commissary (repeater); Billy Murphy, African Dodgers (repeater); Edward Flynn, Superintendent of Properties; J. Anderson, 24 hour agent; J. C. Kelly, Legal Adjuster; and Mark Monroe,

Superintendent of Animals including 2 elephants (repeater). W. E. Sands (repeater of old) was the advertising car #1 Manager and James Johnson headed up advertising car #2 (not really a separate ad car).

The performance as represented by

the *New York Clipper* and the *Billboard* causes some writer's distress. The *Clipper* provided a detail review of the opening day's presentation which began with a "... well arranged tournament, showing beautiful young women and robust and handsome men in gorgeous costumes, astride beautiful stallions and carts parading around the tent. The first number on the program was allotted to several trapeze and ring acts, which included Eva Herminger, Iva Orton, Anna Leon, Bessie Gregory and Eddie Baird. All are perfect artists, performing some really remarkable stunts. Marguerite Corrica, in a riding act, made a pretty picture, being costumed in a handsome blue silk dress. She leaps upon the horse's back and then to the ground in a graceful manner, finishing per performance with a whirlwind dash around the track, doing many difficult stunts around the track.

"The arena was then given over to the clown, and the capers cut up by them won the heartiest laughter. Among the fun makers were: Charles La-Belle, George Heminger, Minert De Orlo, Jack Martin, Jim Kingcade, Lew Loomis, Jim Roome, Fred L. Gay, Dan DuCrow and Horace Laird. A risley act, by the Morey Bros. was as good as the writer has ever witnessed. Miss Winslow, in a contortion act, pleased greatly. Jack Cousin (the equestrian director) with his beautiful black stallion, 'Ben Ali,' in a menage performance, had this number to himself, and again demonstrated his ability as a born trainer. He put his horse through many pretty steps, and concludes his performance with a turkey trot, keeping in perfect time with the band.



"A Burlesque on this was then given by one of the funny men, and created rears of laughter. Billy Leon, in a loop-walking act, held the audience spellbound with his seemingly death defying stunts while projected from the top of the tent, hanging head downward.

"The Three Herberts, acrobats, are second to none in their line of work performing some wonderful tricks in a graceful manner. A burlesque ball game was put on by the clowns in a humorous way, and got much laughter.

"The Marvelous Colton, in feats of strength, held the attention of everyone. Being very light built, he surprised everybody with his excellent work. He features lifting ten men seated on a plank with his back. Hilary Long, in as good a head balancing performance as there is in the business today, does more tricks perched on his head on a trapeze than most men can do standing. He juggles, drinks, smokes and does a long swing that was a hair-raiser. The feature of his performance is a slide from the top of the tent down a wire on his head. It is a performance worthy of the best.

"Six beautiful black stallions, worked by Jack Cousins, was another feature and was a big success. The horses worked finely, performing figure and dancing steps in a capable manner. Joe Morey and Bros. then presented a posturing performance, which was a big encore getter. Mr. Morey, on the block, juggled the youngest with his feet, executing difficult tricks. He also uses a barrel and keeps good time with the band.

In this display several double trapeze acts are shown. The Two Heningers, the Aerial Leon, on the rings, all perform some remarkable and wonderful stunts that earned for all plenty of applause.

"The next was one of the features of the program, and displayed the splendid talents of Iva Orton, a beautiful and shapely young woman, on the flying perch. Her performance was a noteworthy one, and was one of the hits of the performances. The Two Armenians, in a wire act, showed their skill in their style of work. both are clever artists, executing many difficult stunts. Another one of the features of the program was performed by Hilary Long, in walking down a flight of steps on his head. He met with instant approval.

"A riding act, one of the best in the business, was given by the Misses Amelia and Marietta Carrieas. Two handsomer or shapelier women would be hard to find and working with two snow-white horses, they made a pretty picture. The four Flying Munichs, in a casting act of much excellence, was the closing feature, and was a fitting climax to a wonderful program. The work of all four members was beyond criticism."

All in all, a very positive review. However, the review in the *Billboard* took a different slant and remarkably provided a description of a featured act not addressed at all in the *Clipper* article. Importantly, the *Billboard* included four pictures of

The Robbins side show bannerline in Wilmington, Ohio in 1912. Pfening Archives.

features. They included Hillary Long descending a flight of stairs on his head, the four Flying Munichs, Carmelo Naselli and his Italian Band, and Irene Jermena, premier tight-wire artiste. A quick glance to the *Clipper's* review does not even mention this featured woman performer. The *Billboard* went on to say that "Irma Irmene (Irene Jermena?) and Billy Irmene showed a novelty wire act that is worthy of special mention. Miss Irmene is exceedingly pretty and shapely, and Billy Irmene is none other than our old friend Billy Winslow, the principal clown. Billy was the principal clown with the Barnum show for four years."

The *Billboard* discussed several acts as being exceptional. These included Hillary Long as being the best head-balancer in the business: O. R. Coulter, the strong man; the Three Moreys with their very clever shoulder perch act; the Three Herberts demonstrating their splendid athleticism: the Aerial Yorks on the rings and double bars; and the Four Munichs, aerialists including Miss Margaret as being one of the best in the world. The clowning was considered to be very good with excellent and clever routines. On the other hand, "(t)he tent was poorly lighted and consequently rather gloomy, and the audience did not show the enthusiasm which the performance merited." Very unusual comment to be sure.

Frank Morris managed the side show and had a strong array of performers and oddities to capture the interest of the towners. They included "T. Hamilton, Punch and Judy; LaBelle Asia, La Belle Frieda and La Belle Rosa, dancing girls; Mme. Morina, second-sight and mind reading; Mrs. Wallace, snake charmer; Marie Devere, sword swallower; Lilly Gillis, fire queen; the best trained bears ever seen with any show, and Prof. Harry Nugent, magic, illusion, lectures." The *Clipper* did not mention the bears but added the Mysterious Aga, and Jacobs' Georgia Minstrels and band.

In the concert were Anna Leon, songstress; Jessie Tolivar with roller skate dancing; Eddie Laird, singing and dancing; Charlotte Flock, another female





singer; Jim Roome, black face monologue; Lew Loomis, a rube; and J. S. Kelly, a one-legged dancer. The concert was considered excellent.

The *Billboard* had the show opening on April 24th. Not to be outdone, the *Clipper* told the world that the show opened on April 25th. At least it is nice to know that both publications believed the initial date to be in the Greenville section of Jersey City. Both articles noted the very windy conditions prevailing at the opening. Excellent attendance at both performances was had. To resolve this most perplexing question as to the actual opening date, it was in fact April 24th; so score one for the *Billboard*. The *Clipper* noted that the show was heading west with plans to play Michigan during its tour. It also observed that several cars and many new wagons and cages had been added. The circus had the appearance of being brand new.

What then was the size of the 1912 edition of the Frank A. Robbins Circus? Simply stated, we don't know for sure. The *Bandwagon* of December 1961 listed the sizing of railroad circuses commencing with 1910. For the Frank A. Robbins Circus, John A. Havirland, the compiler of this list, had the 1912 rail consist being 1 advance, 3 stocks, 6 flats and 3 coaches. If this is accurate, it represented a reduction of 1 flat and 1 coach from the 1911 train. However, we know that Mr. Robbins purchased a number of cages and parade wagons from the auction the prior November. Most of these were added to the show replacing a number of older wagons. We previously observed that larger cages, which were loaded length-wise on the flats, replaced the cross-cages used during 1911. One of those cages contained a newly born kangaroo and its mother. The list of personnel seems to be as heavy as in prior years so the dropping of a coach appears unlikely. All in all, the odds are that the train remained unchanged from 1911, at least at the beginning of the season. A number of press reports during



A cage in the Robbins parade in Wilmington, Ohio. Pfening Archives.

the season noted the circus had 14 cars back with the show.

On April 25th, the *Jersey City Journal* also reviewed the opening but also flavored it with an amusing incident that captures the unexpected woes of circusdom. It went on to say "... (t)he baby elephant of the Frank A. Robbins circus disappointed the crowds, which attended the afternoon performance at the big tent yesterday afternoon. She refused to leave the winter quarters at Bartel's menagerie in West Bergen in time for the matinee and in fact it was several hours before her handlers could get her to move and this would not have been accomplished had it not been for Queen, the circus horse, which has been an almost constant companion of the elephant for years.

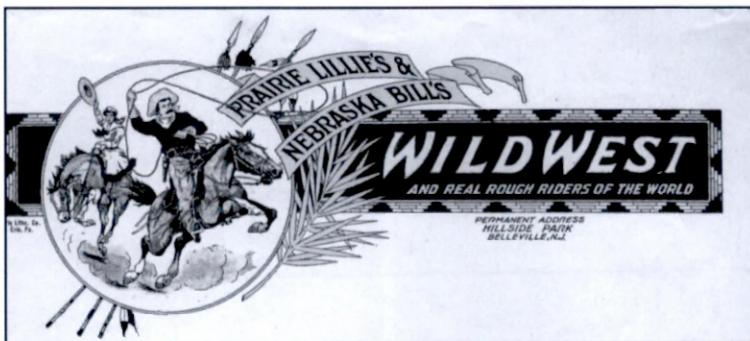
"Yesterday morning after the parade when all the animals were taken to the tent and placed under the canvas, word was sent to the winter quarters to bring Babe along. One of the stable boys was directed

The Prairie Lillie Wild West provided opposition to Robbins early in the 1912 season. Pfening Archives.

to take Queen in the quarters, as it was known that Babe would not leave without her. The boy made a mistake in selecting the horse from among those in the stable tent and when he arrived at the winter quarters, Babe, instead of accompanying, made a charge at the animal he had brought with him. Word was sent back to the show that Babe was acting queerly and another man was sent to help those trying to get the elephant on his way. This handler found that the horse sent for Babe was not Queen and sent the stable boy back on the run with instructions to get her. This was done and when Babe saw the other horse enter the quarters she greeted her with a call of welcome which the press agent says is used by all jungle animals and ambled along after her on the return to the circus tent." Three thoughts come out of this episode. First, the Babe did not make the parade for an unexplained reason and perhaps never did. No mention was made of the elephant that was purchased from Ringling during the latter part of the 1911 tour. Presumably it was still on the show but for whatever reason, Babe clung to its security blanket relationship with the horse, Queen. Lastly, the Robbins' animals were not quartered

with the wagons in west central Jersey City, but were harbored at the Bartels animal facility in West Bergen.

Following the two day opening stand in the Greenville section, the circus overlanded it to the Marion section for a single day (4/26) and another overland haul to Hoboken (4/27).





After the loading of the train for the first time in Hoboken, the circus was railed to Rahway for a Monday date (4/29). There the elements were lying in wait for its arrival. Rain fell in torrents throughout the day and held the attendance down to only the brave and determined. But that is not all. One of the acrobats was thrown to the ground when a trapeze broke and sustained a broken arm. Then a local claimed that the circus wagons drove over the sidewalk and broke the flagging (stone?). An inspection did indeed evidence broken flagging but such breaks were old. Later, the parade was proceeding up Main Street when a parade wagon slued and broke a sewer tile. Some wanted the circus to pay for the tile and Mr. Robbins offered to do so, but the city waived such reimbursement. As a final measure, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals paid a visit and pleasantly found all was well with the sundry animals. Oh yes, those few folks that saw the performance just loved it.

A fairly long jump south took the circus to Burlington (4/30) where it was well received by the locales. It was described as a "corker." There was another important mention and that read as follows: "One brand new feature that should not be overlooked is that the circus has as its press agent a demure little lady who is right on the job." And who do you think that this demure little lady might be? It was none other than daughter Winona who obviously had expanded her role in the circus. She had not yet reached the age of twenty. Female press agents were not the ordinary fare. In fact, Winona may have been the first and most certainly the youngest up to this time. That she was competent in this role is without question given the frequent positive comments given her over the years to come. Frank A. and the Mrs. must also share the glory for permitting Winnie to enter the domain of the



The Sparks show gave Robbins opposition in Pennsylvania in 1912. Pfening Archives.

male dominated press. Good business continued at Camden (5/1) and Salem (5/2). Because of a high license fee being charged at Salem, the circus lot was, in fact, in Claysville a couple of miles away, which avoided such fees. Turning north, Millville greeted Robbins with fine business and outstanding reviews. The week concluded at Bridgeton (5/4) where business continued to be good.

The second full week opened at Lakewood in central New Jersey. Red Bank (5/7) followed with about 70 five-to-nine year old students of a local school attending the afternoon performance as a group. They were guests of the editor of the *Red Bank Register*. The children were given candy peanuts, chocolate blocks, pick lemonade, crackerjacks, and popcorn.

They generally enjoyed the performance although some were so young that they were afraid during several of the clown sequences. At

the conclusion of the performance, Frank A. Robbins invited the children to remain for the concert, which they did to their pleasure. Bad weather disturbed the tranquility of the circus date at Plainfield (5/8). The attendance was light during the afternoon during the heaviest period of rain. However with clearing during the evening, the towners responded in kind with a full tent. A

number of the acts received special mention in the press with Hillary Long heading the list. The music was noted as being especially fine. The City's Health Department was particularly slow in doing its thing thereby delaying the erection of the tents until late morning. So dilatory was the health inspection that J. C. Kelley, legal adjuster for the show, contacted the Mayor to express his displeasure with the Health Officials. No explanation for the delays was provided. Short jumps to Somerville and Westfield were accomplished in good order and very good business, putting the outfit at Elizabeth (5/11) to wrap up the week. Being the first in this fairly large city under blue skies made for an excellent day on the trail.

Spring rains softened the lot in Bergen County's seat of government, Hackensack (5/13), but the show arrived on Sunday permitting a leisurely setup. The soggy lot may have prevented the horses and bareback acts from performing at their optimum. However, the overflow crowds greatly appreciated the overall presentation with the aerial, tight wire and head balancing acts being particularly cited as outstanding. It was another short run of 10 or so miles to Englewood where a good day was had. It was mentioned in the local press that the show traveled on fourteen cars (back?). Rutherford (5/15) was next for an OK day, followed by Sussex. At this latter town a deluge prevented the night performance and it was only





with great difficulty did the show get off the lot in time to play Butler the next day. The week closed successfully at Montclair without incident.

For whatever reason, the incredibly intense competition experienced by Frank A. Robbins in New Jersey in 1911 was not present during 1912. For instance, at Morristown, Frank A. was the third show to play that town in 1911 during early May. This does not mean that they're no other shows lurking about. On May 20th, 1912, Frank A. was the second in Morristown following Sparks by about ten days. This lessening of competition rang up clearly at the cash register resulting in full houses of very pleased customers. Our hero was interviewed by the Morristown press and had the following comments of interest. "... I have a son at a military academy at Newton. He graduates there in June and my daughter, who is in the show business with me, went up to see him this morning. He has won such honors that some times he gets more notices than the show." Once again the show visited son Milton and the village of Newton (5/21).

Two packed houses greeted the visitors notwithstanding that it again followed Sparks by about two weeks. Hackettstown (5/23) contributed its share to the run of good or better dates. On the other hand, Washington (5/23) was only so-so. Those who went to the circus thought it to be the best-ever to visit that town. Crisscrossing the Delaware River, the circus visited Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania on Friday for its typically good day there. Then the week finished on a plus note at its old winter quarters, Frenchtown (5/25). There the locals turned out in goodly numbers and certainly liked what they saw.

The gradual but steady march west began the next week at Norristown, Pennsylvania (5/27). Only fair crowds attended both day and night performances in spite of a front-page press hit by the omnipresent daughter, Winona. The editor thought her to be a youngster of about fifteen. As soon as she began speaking about the show, he was immediately disabused of her presumed youth and was suitably impressed about her intimate knowl-

edge of the show she represented. Two more noteworthy events did take place in Norristown. The *New York Clipper* of June 15th reported that Frank A. took on a new big top there that was larger than the one replaced. It was also reported that he purchased a new Packard ("Ask the man who owns one") automobile that seated eight. It will be recalled that a Packard was the acme of mass produced cars and certainly a strong indication of a successful person. The car was used to convey the Robbins family from town to town, from hotel to hotel, particularly on shorter runs. You can almost



Robbins was also up against Sun Bros. in Pennsylvania in 1912. Pfening Archives.

bet that daughter, Winona, then took the car in the execution of her press agent duties, which perhaps included conveying the local reporters to the lot for a look-see at the circus being set up. A very nice sales tool. Can you imagine a very attractive young lady, nineteen but looking fifteen, driving about town in the best of

automobiles with the editor and/or reporter of the local newspaper sitting along side? Don't you think that more than a couple of towners would notice? I suspect that they just might.

Continuing slowly west through East Greenville and Pottstown, the show played the small city of Lebanon (5/30) to terrific reviews but only fair size audiences. After a fairly long mid-week jump of almost 90 miles directly west, it wasn't much better the next day at Lewistown where a small afternoon presence was only somewhat offset by a good night turnout. Houtzdale (6/1) was about the same but at least the run was only about half of the previous night. For the next week the show was routed throughout central Pennsylvania commencing at Clearfield (6/3) and wending south culminating at Windber (6/8), just outside the large city of Johnstown. Business continued just OK but at least most of the jumps were short. Hagenbeck-Wallace played Johnstown about a month before and Ringling did likewise on May 24th. There could not have been too many loose quarters for Frank A. to sweep up on the streets of Windber. By the way, not to be discouraged by being fourth in, Sun Bros. followed our hero in Windber by another week. One can imagine that this village was circused out by that time.

Seeking less focused competition, Frank A. journeyed even further west to a point north east of Pittsburgh, the town of Vandergrift (6/10). There it wasn't a circus but the 10 car wild west aggregation of Prairie Lillies & Nebraska Bill's beating them to the lot but two days earlier (6/8). However, the wild west show was not advertised as a circus, and not sold as such. One could go to a wild west show one day and the circus the next and not feel as if he or she was seeing generally the same performance. So its presence wasn't as damaging as if it was Sun Bros. or the like. Nevertheless, it did not help Frank A.'s business either and that was reflected at the ticket wagon. The situation was reversed at Brookville (6/12) where Robbins preceded Prairie Lillie by five days. Unfortunately the weather was rainy



during the Robbins' stand and perfect for the following show. As a result, Prairie Lillie enjoyed three times the attendance as did Robbins. Two good houses rewarded an easterly short jaunt to Dubois. There the local reported with amusement how the cushion sellers worked the game. They would pick out some young man accompanied by his girl. Then the cushion man would guide the couple to what he would glibly describe as the best seat in the house, place two cushions on the seats and whisper to the young man that it would cost two bits for the cushions. As the couple was already seated, seldom would the young man tell his girl to get off her cushion and give it back. Normally he would meekly pay the quarter, knowing that he was had in his vigorous pursuit of love.

Continuing in a northeasterly direction, Renovo was scheduled for a Friday date (6/14) and turned out in force during both performances. Accompanying the fine review was the observation that the personal appearance of the performers was outstanding. The costumes were all fresh and clean; all the colors blended nicely.

The next day Lock Haven was played to good business but significant distress and excitement followed the evening performance. After the performance, a local seventeen year old lass accompanied by a similarly aged young lady, walked around the big top around 10 p.m. They stopped to listen to the music of the concert when three men accosted both. One of the young ladies broke away but the other was hit on the head by a blunt instrument and then choked to insensibility. She was then raped. All of this happened in a very short duration as the other lady had secured the attention of others on the circus grounds, and they rushed to

the scene of the assault. They thought that the rape victim was dead but she seemed now to be recovering. Obviously the first suspects of the crime were circus employees. However, after a vigorous search of the circus train, no persons fitting the meager descriptions of the perpetrators were found and no employees seemed to be missing. The circus was released and it proceeded to the next scheduled town, Wellsboro, for a Monday date (6/17). A Lock Haven resident believed

he had observed the three men hanging around the circus lot throughout the day. He was deputized and on Sunday he and a constable arrested one individual in nearby Avis.

On Monday, two other suspects were arrested in Tyrone, some distance to the southwest of Lock Haven.

These men were later brought to Lock Haven where a large angry crowd formed a welcoming committee. In view of the mood of the crowd, the suspects were smuggled into the jail with a cordon of policemen to protect them. With the prisoners safely locked away, the crowd eventually dispersed. The final disposition of the case is not known to this writer but apparently did not involve the circus in any way.

The next week (hopefully calmer) opened at Wellsboro to a good afternoon house but a much lighter one under the stars. The menagerie was thought to be rather slim but with an odor that would match a much larger one. All of the cages and animals therein could use a good cleaning. A potential serious accident was avoided by the presence of the net. During the afternoon performance, a double trapeze broke loose from its moorings. All four performers, two male and two female, were pitched headlong into the net below along with

the heavy iron bar. Fortunately, all fell slightly apart from one another and all injury was avoided. At Westfield (6/18), the show preceded Prairie Lillie by more than two weeks but that did not stop the latter show from taking out a half page ad in the local paper announcing its wares. Winona did her thing and impressed the local editor with herself and the Show she represented. She was described as "charming." Just OK business resulted. Frank A. and friends were once again heading westerly but this time across northern Pennsylvania, a short distance from the New York State line. Galeton (6/19), Coudersport (6/20), and Port Allegheny were played before completing the week at Emporium. At the latter stand, high praise flowed from the crowds that attended. The locals considered the performance to be even better than the one presented by Robbins two years earlier.

There were a total of five short circus related articles on the front page of the *Daily Press*, the paper of record in St. Marys (6/25), the county seat of Elk County. First, and most important to Frank A., the performance was well received by the big afternoon attendees. The night house was only fair. Another article advised that good order prevailed throughout the day because no gambling was permitted as apparently it was at other nearby locations. A very strange snippet appeared regarding two employees who were arrested for destroying the clothes of a number of local boys who they hired to assist them. As the men had no money, the show's management was required to pay for the destroyed clothes. No explanation was provided as to why the clothes were ruined. The seat cushion caper once again received appropriate notoriety. The article noted that the cushions could have been purchased locally for only ten cents as contrasted to the quarter charged by the show for rental. Lastly it was noted that the snake charmer (Mrs. Wallace?) left the circus and departed for New York. It seems she was severely beaten on Sunday by another employee (her husband?) and decided that sitting with the snakes was more desirable than having one as her lover.





Good business was experienced at Ridgway (6/25). Kane was similar but Warren was nothing to brag about. At Oil City (6/29) the city streets were torn up for the purpose of laying new conduit. As a result, a most unusual routing for the parade was employed which did not present the parade in the best possible format. Nevertheless, it was greatly enjoyed by the populace as was the largely attended performances. July opened at Franklin. Actually the train arrived early on Sunday. Just the menagerie and dining tents were erected that day. The parade was given on Monday to hundreds that lined the streets. A much smaller house followed a large crowd in the afternoon in the evening. The press believed that the high quality of the performance deserved a better showing of the locales under the moonlight. Rimersburg (7/3) had Sun Bros. wagon tracks about the lot that were less than two weeks old. That never helps business. However, on our Nation's birthday, Clarion delivered large and patriotic crowds to the parade and both performances. There was direct competition from a carnival at Tarentum (7/6) which drew very large crowds. The Robbins' aggregation was sparsely attended. The local press claimed that its performance was not up to standard. In addition, although the parade was as large as anticipated, it was physically unattractive and that probably contributed to the poor attendance at the performances.

In response to a FAR letter dated July 7th (Sunday), George Sun stated "... Note what you say regarding the billing at East Brady. (Sun played that town on June 26th and Robbins July 5th). The present time is bad for business, as the farmers will not come in. I trust that your business will improve and that you will have a successful season. With all best wishes." Although it is not specifically known what Frank A. wrote George about, one can almost bet that it dealt with Sun Bros.' ad crew covering FAR paper which act apparently was inconsistent with the understanding between the two shows. George Sun wrote his letter from Tecumseh, Michigan a state that FAR would soon be visiting.

The only big show coming this year. Paulding  
Wednesday, August 21st.

## Frank A. Robbins'

New and Greatest All-Feature Shows—A Host of Clowns  
that cater to a nation, whose inimitable burlesque  
of popular games, prominent people's fads  
and fashions, fools and follies make  
people fall off their seats.



All new feature acts--Most surprising beasts of  
many species in cute, cunning and curious  
antics to charm the children.

**Grand Free Street Parade, 10 a. m.**  
Rain or Shine.

Two Performances--2 and 8 p. m.

Newspaper ad used by Robbins in Paulding, Ohio. John Polacsek collection.

More importantly, Frank A. must have complained about the business being done by his show, and the relatively poor business was being shared by Sun Bros. George Sun attributed it to the farmers being busy harvesting their crops, a situation that John Robinson warned Frank A. about the previous year when transversing Ohio. Mr. Robinson observed that the farmers would be harvesting their crops during the month of July and not to expect to do any business in that area at that time. Ohio was merely some 75 miles directly west of the area being played by Robbins and what was said for Ohio certainly applied to this section of Pennsylvania.

On July 8th old friend Walter L. Main penned the following: "Received letter from you some time ago about buying cages which can't use at present. What will you give me

for the male lion I bought at the Dan Robinson sale? Note you show Geneva, (Ohio, July) 22, if I am not at home I wish you would drive out to the winter quarters, and look at the Calliope, Big Band Wagon and other property. If you wish to purchase any, take the number, and let me know what you desire." With recent spate of less than good business, it is somewhat surprising that Frank A. was seeking additional equipment. Of course, as Robbins' letter was written "some time ago," conditions may have been radically different than they were on July 8th. It is not known if Frank A. was attempting to sell some excess cages he had accumulated because of his rather extensive purchases at Danny Robinson's sale or looking to buy some more. The latter seems highly doubtful yet the press's comment at Tarentum regarding the condition of the parade raises that possibility.

There is no record of any exchange of equipment taking place between Robbins and Main at this time.

For the first time in a few years, an ad was placed in the *Billboard* (6/29) by Frank A. seeking a trap drummer and other musicians for the band. Was this a bad sign? Perhaps. More understandable, in the same issue, Mr. Robbins was also seeking a snake charmer, with or without snakes (and with or without husband), obviously to replace the erstwhile Mrs. Wallace, who was probably ensconced somewhere in New York City. Even more troublesome is another ad in the *Billboard* (7/20) which indicated that Frank A. was seeking A-1 circus acts, a boss property man and animal men. This ad clearly meant that at least some acts had left and the boss property man (Edward Flynn) did likewise. Frank A. added this curious statement in the ad: "People that can stand prosperity preferred." Was Frank A. miffed that some acts left without just cause? It could be because Hillary Long took out a half page ad in The *Billboard* (8/10) noting he opened the season with the Frank Robbins' Show. He claimed to be booked solid with Wirth Bros. Famous Australian Circus for a year-long tour of Australia and New Zealand. With the absence of Mr. Long, the most sensational acts of



the entire show were missing. He did two distinctly separate turns, both of which were superior in every way. If he had departed prior to the Tarentum date, then that would go a long (no pun intended) way to explain the occasional negative press comments regarding the performance after that date. Hillary Long was that important to the overall presentation.

After Tarentum the circus was routed to a number of small towns just south of Pittsburgh, starting with West Elizabeth (7/8) and nearby Donora the next day. Slowly working southeast, Scottsdale was played (7/12) after a 3 mile run from the Mt. Pleasant stand. At Scottsdale the show lot was some distance from town center, which affected business a bit. Nevertheless a goodly number of patrons attended both the afternoon and night performances. They liked what they saw and said so. Irwin concluded the week only a few miles east of West Elizabeth, where it all started. The final week in Pennsylvania began at Grove City, 50 or so miles north of Pittsburgh. Grove City was by far the largest town played by the show for more than a week. As most of the recent dates were really villages, and unless all was perfect in the world of the farmer, little chance of full houses existed. Perfect circumstances do not exist very often in the circus world and business could only be described as marginal. The trek out of the state took the show north to the slightly larger towns of Greenville (7/17) and Meadville (7/18) before exiting into Ohio after Albion (7/19). This latter town is almost on Lake Erie as is the initial town in Ohio, Conneaut (7/20).

It appears the plan at this time was to take the show rapidly across Ohio, then into Michigan for several weeks, and then back to Ohio for a more extended tour. Apparently it had not been decided where to winter the show but it most certainly was not back to Jersey City. Most likely, Ohio; but where? Given the inability to play New York State and New England, Frank A. had about worn out Pennsylvania. Since 1909, literally hundreds of Pennsylvania dates were played, generally with success

but the past tour was nothing to brag about. In fact, the first major consequence of Frank A.'s decision regarding alimony due was at hand. The routing was seriously stale. The Pennsylvania towns needed a rest and Delmarva stops should be included in that category as well. The only option remaining was to head west and this direction never was very good for the show. Would this scenario be repeated? Robbins was prepared to put it to the ultimate test. Without realizing it, he was putting the life of his show at risk, a gamble he would have reason to rue until his untimely death.

Heading toward Michigan, his dash across northern Ohio proved to be a profitable move. He got away from the farming villages of western Pennsylvania which were in the midst of the early harvest season with the resultant focus of the residents on work, not circuses. After Conneaut, the Lake Erie town of Geneva was played (7/22). The circus arrived on Sunday for a leisurely set up. It was noted the circus was not very large as it traveled on 14 cars but purported to be very good. The

Robbins newspaper ad used in Van Wert, Ohio. John Polacsek collection.

**The Only Big Show Coming this Year**

**VAN WERT,**

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 22**

**Frank A. Robbins'**

**New and Greatest All-Feature Shows**

**A Host of Clowns that Cater to a Nation.**




**ALL FEATURE ACTS**

**MOST SURPRISING BEASTS OF MANY SPECIES**

**In Cute, Cunning and Curious Antics • Charm the Children**

**A Grand Free Street Parade at 10 a. m. Daily**

**Rain or Shine.**

**2 Performances—2 and 8 p. m.**

*Geneva Free Press Times* listed several of the features of Robbins extravaganza; one of which was a team of baggage horses weighing 3,600 pounds, which was used for unloading the train. One must presume that such a combined weight was noteworthy to the readers of this newspaper. While the review of the performance was generally favorable, the quality would have been more than adequate for a 25 cent admission fee but not so for the 50 cent ducat. They liked the trained horses and the tight wire artists very much. The tumbling and aerial performers were rated just good. However, the bareback riding and clowning were considered mediocre at best. On the other hand, especially the folks that were taken to the cleaners considered the grifting first-class all around. For instance, a patron to the side show was asked for a five-dollar bill as the ticket seller had so much small change that he felt it necessary to reduce his inventory of coins. Of course, the rube complied and handed over the fiver. He was given a handful of change in a great flourish. Unfortunately when it was counted, the kindly soul was found to be around three dollars short. When the local constable was sent to the scene of the alleged crime(s) (there were others), the ticket seller was nowhere to be found. And of course the town drunk made his contribution to circus chaos. In this case, he was intoxicated when he entered the big top for the evening performance. Unabashedly, he brought a bottle of whisky in the unlikely event he would become thirsty. Images of the Sahara must have been rampant in the sot's mind as he quickly emptied the bottle. Then he bombarded the general area with obscene language, threatening anyone who approached him with the empty bottle. He proceeded to get up from his seat and roll around on the ground as a final indication of social rejection. He eventually quieted down and went to sleep. None of the circus employees attempted to remove the drunk. The paper did not report if, after the performance was completed, and during the teardown, a baggage wagon rolled over the individual. Some things are best left unreported. Painesville preceded



Elyria (7/24). At the latter location, there was a hard rain throughout the day which held down the crowds somewhat but it was still an OK business day. Those who watched the parade indicated it was small but very well done. Continuing westerly, Sandusky was next. Clearing weather brought good business even though Buffalo Bill-Pawnee Bill was in town but three weeks earlier.

There the performance was considered to be the best smaller circus ever to visit that town. Although it was a one-ring program, the activity was constant and the quality was excellent. The paper noted that the menagerie was well stocked with two elephants, two camels, lots of beasts, monkeys, reptiles and birds. The local orphanage charges were given free tickets by the circus management. Many of the children had never seen a circus before and enjoyed the performance immensely. The newspaper gave plenty of free space covering this generosity. One can see the clever hand of Winona in this outreaching to the public. The recent good business was repeated at Wauseon. The performance was considered to be quality all the way. Bryan (7/27), close to the Indiana border, concluded one of the better weeks of the season.

The Indiana tour was short with visits to two small burghs, Butler (7/29) and Ligonier (7/31), separated by a good size town, Kendallville (7/30). No business records were shattered. The routing turned north into Michigan, commencing the tour at Three Rivers (8/1). It continued up the west coast of the state reaching the large city of Holland (8/6). Then Frank A. turned east across the south-center reaching Imlay City (8/12). Midland was the next large town on the schedule (8/15) before heading south, exiting the State after a visit to the city of Jackson (8/19). While at Chesaning (8/16), Mattie Robbins celebrated her 42nd birthday. She was the recipient of many beautiful gifts from friends on and off the show including her

daughter, Winona, who had reassumed her maiden name of Robbins. It would seem that Mr. Anders, the erstwhile general superintendent and dispenser of lovin', was no longer about. Life goes on.

The Michigan tour was beset with rain with the frequent downpours impacting business. South Haven (8/5) was one of the sunnier days and with Ole Sol came some business;



there being a good afternoon but something less than that in the evening. A report regarding sharpies accompanying the show from Lawton (8/3) must have alerted the local gendarmes as there was only one case of shortchanging, which was immediately remedied by show officials. Contrast this to Lawton where many were shortchanged and a farmer was fleeced of \$40 playing the shell game. Probably was the same rube that moved from Delmarva a few years back that also had been amazed to find that the shell game is probably crooked. At St. Johns (8/9) experienced a good watering holding the afternooners to an OK house. With a continuing rain mucking up the lot even more, only a few folks braved the elements at night.

The conditions of the lot lessened the quality of the program with horses barely able to navigate the ring at any speed thereby affecting the ability of the riders to perform. One act that continued to perform par excellence was the cushion racket. At 25 cents a sitting, it was considered highway robbery and inappropriate to a first-class circus. Rain continued at Durand (8/10) thereby reducing the noon crowd to barely fair with many more folks at night. As fre-

quently noted, the parade was considered good or excellent for a smaller circus and the performance rated as excellent with some acts equal to any on the largest circuses. Caro (8/14) enjoyed good weather and for once Mr. Robbins enjoyed good business. The good weather continued for a couple of days with Chesaning,

Mrs. Robbins' birthday site, turning in a nice afternoon house but

only sparse attendance at nighttime. This smaller night house could not be explained by the opinion of those who visited the earlier session as the performance was considered to be the best ever to play the town. Of importance to the reader, it was stated the circus would be heading south and east after exiting Michigan, closing some time in November at Norfolk, Virginia before returning to Jersey City for the

winter. It would seem that St. Louis was still not on the horizon even at this relatively late date.

Ohio was reentered at Alvordton (8/20) which is in the northwest corner of the state. Paulding followed and turned in two good houses and one fine review. The circus continued south paralleling the Indiana border to visit Van Wert before heading toward the east, reaching Upper Sandusky for a Monday date (8/26). The next day found Frank A. at the large town of Marion which was, amazingly, two years fresh. There thousands of locals turned out for the parade and as a whole the stand was a very successful one. Contrast this day to the one following. At Delaware (8/28), very heavy rains held the attendance to only 200 and it is suspected that many of these held passes.

The threatening clouds remained for the next stand, Lancaster, but the rains were in remission. The resultant dull day permitted many locals to enjoy the parade and the performances without getting soaked. Similar attitudes prevailed with the hundreds that departed Lancaster by rail, interurban and automobile enroute to Columbus 30 miles to the northwest for the Centennial and State Fair. Exciting times for



Lancaster. September and Labor Day found the show at Middleport (9/2) right on the Ohio River overlooking West Virginia. It then turned west again, picking up the large town of Jackson before reaching Waverly (9/4). There, during the unloading process, a baggage wagon struck a fire hydrant and snapped it off. A good dousing resulted until the water could be shut off. The show's arrival coincided with the opening of the Pike County Fair. Playing inside the fairgrounds, Frank A. contributed its share to the record-breaking attendance experienced by the fair. In the process the show enjoyed heavy patronage that, in turn, took pleasure in its fare. Routing took the Aggregation across the southern part of the state until it exited at Loveland (9/9) to enter Indiana. While at Washington Court House (9/6), Mr. Robbins initiated discussions with some unnamed locals to establish the winter quarters for his circus in that town. The *Ohio State News* reported that Mr. Robbins was also looking at the towns of Hillsboro, Blanchester, and others in this general area as candidate locations. The abundance of inexpensive, quality feed made this area particularly attractive for the more than 70 horses and ponies as well as the entire menagerie. Unfortunately for that community, nothing more was said about this opportunity and the show would winter elsewhere. Washington C. H. did turn in a couple of good houses despite the rain and high temperatures experienced. About this time, Frank A. and Mattie visited their good friends, John Robinson and his wife, at the latter's home at Terrace Park, Ohio, just outside of Cincinnati. It was a four-day mini-vacation that was probably much needed. While there, the group took a day trip to the Greenville Fair for a very enjoyable sojourn. The Robinsons promised to return the favor by visiting the Robbins Circus the next week. There are no reports that this planned visit actually took place. However, what may have taken place was a detailed discussion between John G. and Frank A. regarding the winter



A cage in a 1912 Robbins parade. Pfening Archives.

ing of the latter's circus. During the winter of 1911/12 John G. had a number of his animals at the Talbots Hippodrome in St. Louis for an extended engagement. He knew the St. Louis area very well having played it for years. It would be reasonable to assume that John G. encouraged Frank A. to winter there as he could possibly play the Talbots with some of his animals and most probably place a number of the animals in a large department store for the Christmas season as Robbins had done before on the East Coast. John G. may also have been familiar with the availability of facilities at the former stockyards in St. Louis that would be ideal to train new animal acts for the 1913 season. See what can happen when two veteran circus men get together with time on their hands. In this case, a whole new lease on life. Also during the same timeframe, long-time employees Joseph Hughes and Billy

Cavanaugh, who had the candy privilege on the circus, quit to enter the airplane exhibition business. They bought the latest model plane. Given the fact that Mr. Hughes was a

Press pass issued by Frank A. Robbins in 1912. Pfening Archives.

1880 — 32d ANNUAL TOUR — 1912	
<b>FRANK A. ROBBINS</b>	
ALL FEATURE SHOWS.	
Account .....	
Admit .....	
Kind of Seats .....	
Date .....	Afternoon or Eve. 1912
Issued by .....	
NOT TRANSFERABLE	

rather portly gentleman, it was obvious who was going to do the flying and who was going to do the promoting; airplane engines at that time having a very limited lift capacity. Meanwhile, Frank A. was advertising in the trade publications for help of a general nature. It can be presumed that the harvesting of crops paid better than working on a circus as a roustabout.

Not terribly surprising to anyone.

If in fact the various candidates sites for winter quartering the show in Ohio were inadequate for whatever reason, Frank A. had to find a home shortly as the season was drawing to a close. It may be that John Robinson's suggestion that the opportunity to house at least some of the animals in a large St. Louis department store for the holiday period during the winter caused the Ohio candidates to pale in comparison to the eventual site. It is very possible that the actual selection of the winter quarters came shortly after the Washington C. H. date and his discussions with John Robinson. Robbins may have explored the St. Louis possibilities though an agent and found them attractive. Whatever the cause, the determination was made to winter in St. Louis and this selection actually drove the interesting routing of the show throughout Illinois. The winter quarters actually selected were two in number; much of the physical equipment was located in Belleville, Illinois, and the remainder including the train, animals, and the business offices were located in St. Louis, Missouri. These two locations were separated by approximately 20 miles.

Heading toward its final destination, the circus played three quick dates in south-central Indiana commencing at Brownstown (9/10). Then it was off to Illinois for better than a month, ending at Belleville (10/19). This extensive tour was concentrated in the south-central section of the State. However, several stands reached as close as 50 miles of Chicago; Dwight (10/2) and Winona (10/3). All of the towns



played were quite small and mostly farming communities. As this tour was generally after the harvest season for most crops, the circus going public was available to be entertained. However, the Frank A. Robbins name was not known at all by the locals and it was after the traditional circus season in that area. Most of towns already had their share of circuses. It was not a successful venture at the box office and success was greatly needed. Frank A. was in trouble.

Meanwhile, the advance was completing its year's work. William Sands closed on October 5 and resigned for the next year. Charles Daley, manager of the No. 2 car and Charles Dale, local contractor, both of whom were also reengaged for 1913, joined sands. General agent J. Henry Rice would continue to the end of the season at Belleville, and then proceed to St. Louis, where he was to look after Mr. Robbins interests there.

Of course, Robbins continued to be active in circus related business not directly connected to his show. On October 30th, he apparently wrote to William E. Franklin of Valparaiso, Indiana relating the recent folding of the Campbell Bros. Circus and the expression of interest in that property by some individuals from Omaha. Mr. Franklin was a experienced, highly regarded, former circus owner (King & Franklin in the late 1880's), railroad contractor (Barnum & Bailey in the early 1890's), and general agent (Walter L. Main, John Robinson, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sells-Floto). He was a contemporary of Frank A. both in age and origin. It may be that the Omaha people were looking for an experienced circus manager or general agent or both. In any event Mr. Franklin penned, "The Parties in Omaha wrote you about figuring on buying the Campbell Bros. show so they write me. Don't think they have necessary capital any way to promote the show. They are figuring on according to the prospectus given me in their correspondence. I have no interest in



A tandem hitch in a 1912 Robbins parade. Pfening Archives.

them or their future. Life is too short to fool with such schemes. It is a wise man who can 'now' operate a show successfully." Seems as though Mr. Franklin understood fast talkers when confronted with them. The Omaha group bought the Campbell Show for a reported \$25,000 but never went out. The show was sold to William Hall of Lancaster, Missouri who reshuffled the equipment leasing some of it to be incorporated into the 15 car 1913 Cole Bros. Circus.

Ever active, and notwithstanding his unattractive financial condition, Robbins wrote to the Ringling Bros. seeking at least one elephant. Quickly replying on November 29th, the Ringling Bros. stated, "Replying to yours of Nov 23rd, we have no elephants for sale at the present time, in fact, our circus surplus property has been disposed of. We listed a lot of stuff last season and are pleased to say that it was easily disposed of at the prices we made on same.

Everything here going fine. We have been having splendid weather up here up this time." The Ringling letter was addressed to Robbins at the Talbots Hippodrome. This may indicate that Frank A. may have had some animal acts performing at the Hippodrome or merely using it as a mail drop. Meanwhile the *Billboard* was reporting that both Rhoda Royal and Robinson's Circus Animals were presenting their wares at that edifice.

Closing out the year Robbins reported in the *Billboard* from his quarters on Bremen Avenue in St. Louis as follows, "Since our season closed, our trainers have been busily engaged breaking new stock and improving the acts already booked. Prof. Joe Berris, in four weeks, added new tricks to our Liberty act of six

black stallions, and perfected the others, so that they are without question one of the greatest Liberty acts ever seen. They are working vaudeville, and, and being rapidly booked by the largest and best theatres in the country. The elephants, under the direction of Prof. Wm. Thompson, in a new and up-to-date act are also working steadily and giving much satisfaction.

"Our wagons, all being new, or practically so, need so little repairing that we are having it done by local shops, and all will be ready to paint by Jan. 1, when the painters, decorators, etc., will commence.

"We are side by side with the Rhoda Royal show. In the different buildings, there are four rings, each show having two rings, and twenty men and women trainers work eight hours each day. Over a hundred animals are being trained for new acts. So rapid and wonderful is the work being done that it amazes the old trainers."

In the next issue of (12/14/12), Frank A. reported that his animals were placed in Nugents, the leading dry goods store in St. Louis, for the holiday season. This turned out to be a successful engagement for the show, lowering its winter running costs, and Nugents, having a very enticing presentation, and the city's children population, having both Christmas and the circus at the same time.

Pleasant as those thoughts were, Robbins' decision to refuse to pay alimony to his first wife had deleterious effects to the well-being of his show. The new territory did not prove to be successful; overall it was a loser. There were no new Packards in the garage. In fact, there probably wasn't even a garage. Something radical had to be done. Without it, he might not even get out of quarters. So although all met in St. Louis as eventually planned, the circus could end up staying there, permanently, which was not in anybody's plan.

(NOTE: A special thanks to John Polascek for his Michigan research.)



# HUNT BROS. CIRCUS WINTER QUARTERS

Charles T. Hunt started his circus in 1892. He died in 1978 and the show was continued by his three sons, Charles, Jr., Harry and Edward. It was revived by his granddaughter Marsha in the late 1970s.

The winter quarters were maintained in Florence, New Jersey.



Aerial view of Hunt Bros. Circus Winter quarters at Florence, N. J.





# Side Lights On The Circus Business

## PART TWENTY-FIVE

By David W. Watt

*Editor's note. The dates listed are the days this article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.*

### September 18, 1915

When casually walking along the streets of Janesville one would hardly expect to run into an old friend of P. T. Barnum's, but this actually happened to me a few days ago when I met O. L. DeForest on Mineral Point Avenue, an old time friend of mine whom I have known well for forty years. While passing the of day, he took occasion to tell me the pleasure he had derived from reading my side-lights on the circus. "But," he said, "these are probably of more interest to me at my age than to the average person, for that several years of my boyhood days I spent in New York City up to the early fifty's and one of my friends was P. T. Barnum whose name still appears as a headliner on the great show founded so many years ago. My association with him in my early life possibly put the bug in my head, and any-thing since that time pertaining to circuses has always been interesting to me."

It was along, I think, in about November, '49, that Mr. Barnum conceived the idea of bringing the great Swedish singer, Jenny Lind, to this country. And it was only a few days later that Mr. Barnum commenced to cast about for the proper man to send to the old country to see if it was possible to make a contract with her to sing in this country for a hundred or more concerts. He soon decided to send a man by the name of John Hall Wilton; and on the sixth day of November 1849, John Wilton was on his way to Europe. On the ninth day of the following January, 1850, Mr. Wilton, representing P. T. Barnum, had signed a contract with the famous singer for one hundred and fifty nights, for which she was to re-

ceive \$1,000 per night and all expenses, the engagement to commence early the following September.

Early in the morning of September first, which was on Sunday, word was received that the boat with the famous singer and her party on board was lying off Sandy Hook. P. T. Barnum and Mr. DeForest went to the wharf where the boat was to land; and as the news had spread all over the city, thousands of people had congregated to try and get a glimpse of the Swedish Nightingale. Mr. Barnum had tug engaged and was taken out to Sandy Hook, where he boarded the boat and for the first time met the great singer. It was just about high noon and a beautiful day when the boat landed at Castle Garden amid cheers of thousands of people; and, as Mr. DeForest told it, it looked as though not only all of New

Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless other wise credited.



York was there, but thousands from New Jersey. The finest carriage with four horses attached was waiting on the dock, and the party was soon seated in it. But in less than a minute the horses were taken from the carriage and a rope attached, which looked to be long enough to reach from the corner of Main and Milwaukee to the Five Points. And then began a scramble, everyone wishing to be one of the thousands to help draw the carriage from the dock to the St. Nicholas Hotel, where a concert was given by the then famous Wadsworth Band. And Mr. Barnum, with the famous singer, stepped out on the balcony and introduced her to the crowd. And this, without a question, was the greatest honor ever accorded anyone from across the water, and was the one great stepping stone to fame and fortune of the great showman. The first tickets sold for the opening concert were sold at auction, the first one bringing \$200 and went to a man by the name of Jennings, who at that time was a famous hatter on Broadway.

Although Mr. DeForest is nearly ninety years of age, his memory is as good as it was half a century ago. And he seldom forgets anything of importance that happened in his boyhood days. He takes great pleasure in rehearsing instances that happened in New York City more than sixty-five years ago.

The whereabouts of the different shows at the present time are: Barnum & Bailey, Indiana; Ringling, Missouri; Hagenbeck-Wallace, Indiana; Miller Brothers' Wild West, Ohio; and Gollmar Brothers, Kansas; and of these shows that are going South, the bands will soon be playing the old tune of *Down in Dixie*. After weeks and months of mud, rain and blowdowns, sometimes missing a stand entirely and encountering the



worst weather ever known in the business, the bad luck of the Charles Sparks Show, finally turned, and a couple of weeks ago got worse. They were quarantined in Illinois for some days on account of foot and mouth disease, missing several of their stands before they were released.

The fresh outbreak of the hoof and mouth disease in Illinois threw all of the shows, and several carnival companies caught within the state, into a panic last week. Many important fairs will probably be very seriously affected. At McHenry, Illinois, August 27, though without a trace of infection with the animals of the show, and not even an infected district, the Sparks Show were quarantined. This was a great hardship because the infection is confined to Cook County and six others contiguous thereto. Charles Sparks, C. B. Fredericks, and F. W. Ballinger immediately hastened to Chicago for a conference with the authorities to see if modifications in the order, which would permit of the show moving, could not be had, but to Sunday evening their representations had fallen on deaf ears and their efforts were in vain. The show had already lost its dates at Palatine and Harvey. The financial loss was severe.

The Hugo Bros.' shows were caught in Chicago, but were not prevented from showing. Manager Lon Williams did not know where he was. The Hagenbeck-Wallace show got out of the state just in time, but their routing will take them back into it after some four or five stands in Indiana have been played. So some lively switching may have to be done. The Barnum & Bailey shows was due to play Aurora, September 1, and Galesburg, September 2, while Gentry Bros. were scheduled for Evanston, August 30.

Jack Curley spent a few days with Jess Willard at Atlantic City, where the champion was earning his per diem with the Miller Bros. & Arlington 101 Ranch Wild West Shows. "Jess is 'mooching' along daily stunts as a bronco buster and annihilator of road agents," said Curley, "and enjoying himself immensely, and intends to stick to his job until the show goes into winter quarters in



Hugo Bros. Circus letterhead used in 1915. Circus World Museum collection.

November. The champion is pulling down about \$5,000 per week; and so long as he can do that, don't you think he'd be foolish to go looking for a fight? 'He certainly would,' they replied. Well, that's what he is doing week in and week out, 'Mr. Curley said, "and, what's more, we're going to keep him right at it while the show is out. But that is what Jess intends doing when the show closes, and you can quote me as saying so. The champion has arranged to go to Kansas and remain with his family for about three weeks after he terminates his engagement with the Miller Bros. & Arlington Wild West show in November, after which time he will go to New York prepared to meet every one of the heavy weights who think they have a chance to relieve him of his title. Jess Willard will fight any of these big fellows," Mr. Curley said, "and, in part, gamble with them on the receipts; that is, he'll not ask for an absolute guarantee, but take a chance on a percentage for what the contest draws. This might appear as a very liberal proposition coming from the champion, and it is; but make no mistake, big Jess knows exactly what he is doing all the time and his reason for making the proposition is just this: he feels confident of his ability to knock out every heavyweight in the country in one of those ten-round bouts and thereby enhance his drawing ability for next season, when he again joins the Miller Bros. & Arlington Wild West Show."

**September 25, 1915**

A few days ago I received a long letter from a friend with whom I had traveled for many years; and after asking many questions as to what

had become of this man and that one in the business, he finally drifted on to the advance agents of the different shows, commencing back into the 70's. He enumerated more than a dozen of the highest-class men in the business, all of whom he knew I was in close touch with, as anyone could be. It was I that all their contracts came from, and if anything out of the ordinary hap-

pened, a letter of advice would always come with the contracts.

But in summing them all up, he finally said, "And the last but not the least of all these was George K. Steele. You know that George was a southern gentleman of the highest type, whose work was always to the letter; and consequently a very easy man to follow, for George never promised a lot for a billboard, or a hotel man that he could not deliver. George K. Steele," he said, "was a typical Southerner with his broad-brimmed white hat, and he had much of the Negro accent in his voice. He came to the Burr Robbins show as general agent early in the spring of 1875, and his entire equipment for the advance consisted of a double team, with a covered wagon and three bill posters, and a single horse and top buggy for his own use. In those days the farmers in this part of the country did not have the large tobacco sheds that they have today, and as thirty dollars was the limit for Mr. Steele to pay for billboards, he and his men were busy every day driving over the country, covering barns and sheds wherever they could secure the privilege."

Of the twelve or fifteen men mentioned in his letter, [who] were the highest class in the business in those days, there are but two of them left. But since that time the business has kept growing until today with the big shows there are three big advance cars, carrying about twenty men each and covering the country a week apart, advertising the coming of the great shows.

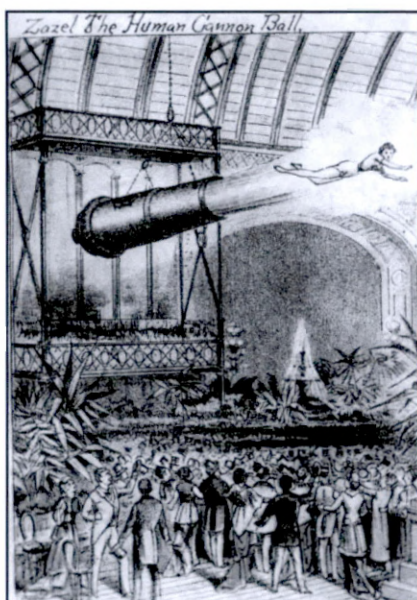
The following extract from a letter written to a friend more than sixty years ago by P. T. Barnum contains the following advice pertaining to advertising: "Advertise your business. Do not hide your light under a bushel. Whatever your occupation or calling may be, if it needs support



from the public, advertise it thoroughly and efficiently, in some shape or other, that will arrest public attention. I freely confess that what success I have had in my life may fairly be attributed more to the public press than to nearly all other causes combined. There may possibly be occupations that do not require advertising, but I cannot well conceive what they are.

"Men in business will sometimes tell you that they have tried advertising, and that it did not pay. This is only when advertising is done sparingly and grudgingly. Homeopathic doses of advertising will not pay perhaps—it is like half a potion of physic, making the patient sick, but effecting nothing. Administer liberally and the cure will be sure and permanent."

Last week a traveling man from Boston, who was an entire stranger to me, looked me up and said that two weeks ago last Sunday he had the pleasure of eating a chicken dinner with an old friend of mine in the suburbs of Boston, Mass. When he handed me the card, it bore the name of John L. Sullivan, the ex-champion pugilist. The traveling man said, "Sullivan and I have been friends for many years, and I often go out and spend the day at his home. While at dinner, I told him that I would leave the next day for the west for a long business trip and he asked me if Janesville, Wis., was on my list, and when I told him it was, he handed me this card and said, 'Be sure and ask for Dave Watt when you get to Janesville.' Then the old man went back and told me from the first time he had met you, which was at Bridgeport, Conn., in 1882, while there with a dozen or more pugilists to give a benefit for an old fighter that was down and out. Young John A. Forepaugh," he said, "a nephew of Adam and manager of the show, was my particular friend, and when fourteen or fifteen of us went out to the circus in the afternoon, I naturally inquired at the ticket wagon for my friend, John, who, I knew would give all of us passes to the show. When I inquired for him Dave said, 'Mr. John Forepaugh is back in the show somewhere, but rather than have any trouble with you people, I will be glad to give you the best seats in



Zazel, the human cannonball, long a great feature with the Barnum show.

the house and will send a man in with you who will soon find Mr. Forepaugh and tell him that your party is in the show. "And from that day on John L. Sullivan has never forgotten that my home is in Janesville and occasionally sends me a message to let me know that he is still in the land of the living.

One of the highest-class men in the business died at his home in London a short time ago, and although he had made his home in England for a few years, he was a native of this country and a man whom I was in close touch with in the business for many years. In a letter from an old friend of mine, Louis E. Cooke, the story of his life is best told.

London, Sept. 11 (Special cable to the *Billboard*): George Oscar Starr, well-known American showman, passed away at Upper Norwood. George Oscar Starr was one of nature's noblemen, with a multiplicity of experiences in this and foreign lands of whom I have said in biography, no man in the arsenic world was more capable or efficient.

He was born in Bethel, Conn., the birthplace of P. T. Barnum, on April 1, 1849, therefore fitting that he should long be connected with that great showman and later personally represented James A. Bailey in all his continental tours and transactions. In 1870, at the age of twenty-one, he gained his diploma in medi-

cine. The same year he obtained his commission as second lieutenant in the New York National Guard, rising successively to the rank of Captain, then Major. In 1887 he became press agent for P. T. Barnum's Great World's Fair, the partners and managers of that institution being George F. Bailey, John J. Nathans and Lewis B. June. Later he became assistant to June, the general agent. For a number of years he was interested in popular-priced entertainments, light operas, museums and theatres in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Baltimore and Brooklyn.

When Mr. Bailey returned to the Barnum show after a rest of two years, George Starr and I were two of the first men engaged as his special representatives. His first commission was to proceed to Europe in search of attractions. While at sea the winter quarters at Bridgeport, Conn. were destroyed by fire. On his arrival in London the news reached him by cable, with instructions to secure all the animals he could find. Quick action brought great results. Telegrams were sent to all European dealers and zoological gardens to hold their animals that might be for sale until he arrived, and this diplomatic move beat the famous Carl Hagenbeck's letters to the same parties by just a few hours. Numerous other foreign missions were entrusted to Stan, always with complete success. It was his mission to entertain noted guests and patrons of the show, and he was in close touch with the nobility and newspaper fraternity throughout Great Britain and Europe.

Of recent years he was general manager of the Crystal Palace, London, England, which position he occupied until the European war broke out, when those premises were taken over for Government purposes, and being in ill health, Starr did not again enter into business engagements. Twice married, his second wife was the renowned Zazel, the human cannonball, so long a great feature with the Barnum Show and another amusement enterprises, including the huge aquarium in London, where she reigned as a particular star for two or three years, when in the zenith of her fame.

His career has been one full of



honor. His friends number all of those with whom he came in contact, and his acquaintances were legion. His memory is a monument to the man.

#### October 2, 1915

Did you ever stop to think of the important part that a high-class band of music plays with the circus? It matters not whether it is the great Ringling show or the little cross roaders that play at school houses and blacksmith shops; they all have their brass band, and with a circus they cut as much a figure as anything else in the show. When I come to look back into the early history of bandmasters and musicians in circus business, Rock County has played their part and played it well, for many years. For more than 35 years ago, one of the greatest leaders, if not the greatest at that time, was a man by the name of Ed. Mentor, leader of the Adam Forepaugh band of twenty-eight pieces; and at least a few of them were high class solo players on their different instruments. It was only those that could read music at sight that were able to get a position with Ed. Mentor: and hold it season after season.

It was along about this time, that Johnny Smith, who was born and raised in Janesville, took the leadership of the Burr Robbins band, which was held until Burr Robbins passed out of the business. While Johnny Smith's band was a small one, they were all musicians and men that he could depend on year after year.

I well recollect of the show getting into Reedsburg, Wisconsin, late one day, and everybody around the show was putting their shoulder to the wheel to try and get the show ready to open on time. At one o'clock in the afternoon John Smith, with his musicians, marched into the show, knowing well that the show would not be ready to open, but one o'clock was the time to be there and Johnny and his band were never late. As soon as they made an appearance, Mr. Robbins spoke to John Smith and said, "Take your men and make the ring bank, for we are going to be late in opening and that will help us out."

Johnny Smith spoke up in a way that no one could mistake, and said, "Mr. Robbins, my band boys make

music but they don't make ring banks. We are ready to furnish the music, but you will have to make your own ring banks, for I will not allow one of my men to turn a hand to anything else." Johnny Smith was strictly business, never was late for a parade or a grand entry; but outside of his work with the band, there was nothing doing.

George Ganweiler, long time Ringling Bros. Circus bandmaster.

Another high-class musician that was a Janesville product was George V. Gray, who still makes his home in Janesville. It was in 1890 that George Gray accepted a position to play in the band at the Soldiers Home in Dayton, Ohio, where he played the clarinet in the band and violin in the orchestra. It was while there that Mr. Gray got the circus bug in his head and the following season made a contract with Billie Weldon, who at that time was leader of the band with the Ringling show. This was George's first season in the circus business. He remained with the Ringling show for six years, where he was featured as a solo player, for even at that time the Ringlings were making a feature of their band.

It was while with the Ringlings that a new band master came and took charge by the name of George Ganweiler, who at that time made his home in Quincy, Ill. George Ganweiler was a high class leader, was a fine dresser; and while he was not what might be called a grand stand leader, he was a high class director that never made any false moves. He took such pride in having his band dressed well. Every man had to wear a stand up collar and his clothes had to be pressed about so often, whether it was his street clothes or his band uniform. Any time when their general appearance on the street or in the band did not suit Mr. Ganweiler, [he] would call their attention to it and say to them, "Young man, it is just as necessary

for you to look well around the show as it is for you to play well."

You would often hear said around the show that George Ganweiler wore out more clothes brushing them than he did wearing them. But the high-class manner in which he kept

his band all during the season was noticeable in many cities where the show played. After George had charge of the band for a season, the high-class men would always be given a raise for the next year.

After six years with the Ringling show, George Gray left and went to the Barnum show, where he remained two years; and although the leader of the band there held out all kinds of inducements

to get Mr. Gray to remain with the show, he had decided to retire from the business and settle in his old home, where he still lives and is doing a good business as teach of violin.

The life of a circus musician is not always an easy one. You play parades every day, rain or shine. In the big cities the parade lasts from three to four hours. That means forty to sixty marches, and then two concerts, and show programs. It is one of the healthiest lives for a musician to lead though, for he is always out of doors. The band is always like a large family; and no matter where you are if out of work, a circus musician will always try to get one of his brother musicians an engagement.

When a musician gets the circus fever, it is hard to be contented with any other life; and some follow the business all their lives. There is no such thing as worry. You know where you can sleep and eat three square meals every day, and the pay envelope never fails, at least with the big shows. The musicians general have their money, and I can recall many who trouped summers and studied winters, becoming lawyers, doctors, and dentists.

The Frank A. Robbins show hit the rocks with a final crash and closed its tour at Salisbury, Md., Monday night, September 13, as a result of an





attachment made by several canvas men for wages due. This was the culmination of a generally disastrous season, which began with discouraging weather and other conditions, only to grow worse instead of better, until the last straw caused the management to succumb. The attachment was made in the afternoon and bonds given. After the night show everything was loaded onto the trains, as usual, including the people, and shipped to Jersey City, N. J., instead of to the next regular stand. On arrival at Jersey City the cars and other property were placed in winter quarters with the exception of the horses, which were turned over to Fiss, Door & Carroll to be sold at auction on Monday, September 20.

Many expressions of sympathy for Frank A. Robbins were heard in and about New York and Jersey City as the news of his closing found its way about; and it was confidently predicted that he would be aided in securing a settlement with his creditors in order that a reorganization might be perfected and the show take the road again in 1916.

I was certainly grieved to hear of the failure of the Frank A. Robbins show; for all the years that I was with the Adam Forepaugh show, Frank A. Robbins was often seen at the winter quarters. And it was Adam Forepaugh that helped young Robbins more than thirty years ago to get his start in the business, which at the commencement was very small, but gradually grew. And any time when Frank A. Robbins wanted animal cars or any kind of equipment for his show he could always come to Adam Forepaugh and get whatever he needed and pay for it when he could.

#### October 9, 1915

Last Monday evening, while visiting with Robert D. Monroe, manager of the Mutt and Jeff show, he said to me, "Dave, you must recollect Senator Frank Bell of New York, who started in the business long before your time and is still in the harness." Although seventy years of age, he was one of the comedians with the show and doing good work. The next morning I made it my business to find the old gentleman who was sitting at a table writing a letter, as he

said, to "Mother," meaning his wife. When I told him who I was, he said, "I have often heard of you and I will have only another line or two to write, and then I will be glad to visit with you until train time." A moment later the old gentleman said, "Well, Dave, what do you want to know?"

I told him that I knew he had traveled the world over many times, always with the highest class companies in the business and that I recollected well of hearing of him starting in the business with Billie Lake's circus, which was one of the first in the business, and what I would like to have him do was to take me back over the long trail and give me as fast as possible some of the interesting bits of his life in the business.

#### Frank A. Robbins

"Well," he said, "early in '61, I enlisted in the civil war where I served nearly four years, intending to stay until the close of the war." Pointing to a scar on the left side of his nose, about middle way of his cheek, he showed me where a bullet had entered his head and lodged in the back of his head where it still remains. "At the time I was wounded," he continued, "none of the boys thought I could live, and one of the bunch that carried me back to the rear made the remark that there was another Bell that would never toll again." And after some months in the hospital, I was sent home and when fully recovered, I started out as a clown with the Billy Lake circus which was a small show playing mostly in towns through the east. And after remaining some time with the Lake Circus, I drifted on to the stage, which seemed to be more to my liking, and from that day on, I have scarcely missed a season. I have spent several seasons in Europe with different companies, was for several years with Denman Thompson in *The Old Homestead*; with J. H. Hearn in *Way Down East*, and was with Shore Acres for two years. I was with Otis Skinner two seasons and played



several engagements with Joe Jefferson, more than thirty years ago when he was playing Rip Van Winkle. And with this show, Mutt and Jeff, I take the part of deputy sheriff and although some people might think that on account of my age, I should retire, still my work seems as easy as it did years ago, and as this has been my life work, I am better contented here and get more pleasure out of it than I could if I retired. For more than forty years, I have numbered among my friends, such men as Adam Forepaugh, P. T. Barnum, James A. Bailey and many other notables in the circus business, as well as all the Frohman boys, and other great producers in the theatrical world."

At this time, one of the company carrying an overcoat on his arm, tapped Mr. Bell on the shoulder, and said, "Come, Daddy, it is train time and I will help you on with your overcoat." Mr. Bell bade me good bye, saying he had only wished the show would stay here over Sunday, "For," said he, "Dave, we could visit over old times which would make it a show day for both of us." One hour spent with such an entertainer as Senator Frank Bell, is more of an education than many a high-class lecturer that you would pay good money to hear. And my only wish is that he may live to come this way again.

P. T. Barnum in his early life in the business started out from a small town in Connecticut with a very unpretentious wagon show, having only a half dozen cages of animals, possibly thirty or more horses, and one elephant. And the season being much like the present one, they encountered much rain and bad weather and at that time. Not having much of a bank account, the show strangled from town to town, occasionally missing one day entirely, hoping each day that the weather might get better, but it grew to be a disastrous season all the way through. Finally young Barnum made up his mind to close the show



early and named the town where the show would close for the season, and on account of poor business, the show was several weeks back in salaries and when it finally closed, Mr. Barnum called the people all together, band performers and working men, and told them that he would be unable to pay all their salaries in full.

"Now," he said, "I have two propositions to make to you and will leave it entirely to you as to which course I shall take. But what I would like to do would be to give you all what money I can, give you my note for the balance and put you all on contract for another season. When I am satisfied that we would get good weather, I could soon pay you all. However, if this does not meet with your approval, I will advertise the show for sale and sell everything to the highest buyer, and you shall get all of the proceeds as far as they will go."

But every man and woman around the show in one voice said, "Give us money enough to get home, and we will all be here in the spring and start out hoping for better weather and a good business." This was done and in just seven weeks after the show opened the following spring and Mr. Barnum called them all to the ticket wagon where they produced their notes that he had given, and ten percent interest was added, and everyone was paid in full. And when men like these pass away; they only need a marker at their last resting place for their good deeds to loom up higher and last longer than any monument that hands could build.

Mary Ellen, a sixteen-year-old elephant on the afternoon of September 26th at St. Louis, seriously injured Charles Le Roy, stage manager at the New Grand Opera House, when she flattened him against a brick wall in the alley behind the playhouse and gashed his neck with one of her tusks. He is in the Jewish hospital here, his condition is considered critical. Le Roy was passing through the alley on his way to work when the elephant, which was waiting for its "act," squeezed him. Mary Ellen is used in a vaudeville act put on her by her owner, T. C. Schultz. Schultz said that the animal had never gored a man and had always been as gentle as a baby.

## October 16, 1915

In the fall of '84, after Adam Forepaugh had counted up the tickets of the evening performance, which work he always did personally, he said to me, "I have engaged several of the people with the show for the coming season, Dave." And [he] mentioned an act that he had not yet closed with, and asked me what I thought of it. And while many times he would ask my advice in such matters, it was not always that he used it.



After he had gone over the list of those that he had already engaged for the coming season, I said to him, "Governor, I know a big Hoosier living on a farm near a small town in Indiana, who is a contortionist and I think a very good one. His appearance, build and manner would not indicate that he is a great performer, for he stands six foot and will weigh around 200. He was with the Burr Robbins show one season and on account of wanting more salary did not return. In appearance you would rather take him to be a boss canvassman or perhaps a heavyweight lifter, but when he gets to work in the ring, he never fails to make a hit. His name is Lem Munson, and I know if your show engaged him for the entire season that he would fill the bill."

Nothing more was said about Munson, and it was along in the winter that I received a letter from him saying that he had signed a contract with the Forepaugh show for the coming season and that he would like to know when I was going on, as he would like to join me at Fort Wayne and go to Philadelphia with me, as he had never been east. I wrote and told him that I would go on to the show a couple of weeks before time to open and would notify him in time so he could meet me at Fort Wayne, where we always stopped for supper; for in those days there were but few dining cars. When the train arrived at Fort Wayne, there was the big Hoosier

who looked more like a big team driver than he did a contortionist, and he was tickled to death to think that he had some one to make the journey with.

We arrived in Philadelphia the next evening, and the following morning we put in an appearance at the show grounds, where the big top was up and a hundred or more performers were in practice. When I introduced Munson to Mr. Forepaugh, he told him to go in and take a look at the big top and perhaps he would find some people there that he knew. After he had left the ticket wagon and come inside, the Governor said, "Dave, I think that you had better get one of those two weeks notices ready, for if that fellow is a contortionist, I will miss my guess. That a man his size can do a contortion act is more than I know, but if he does fit the bill, he will certainly make a hit."

"Well, Governor," I said, "you will be more likely after you look at his act to ask me if it is possible to have him sign up for another season, than you will to give him his two weeks notice."

Munson was a quiet, unpretentious man, made many friends in the business and never lost one. That evening when we went to the hotel, Munson was as anxious as anyone to know how his act pleased the Governor, and if I thought that he had made good. He stayed with the show several seasons, and it was with regret that the management and, in fact, everyone around the show that the Indiana Hoosier had concluded to retire from the business. It has been some twenty-seven or twenty-eight years since I have heard from him, but if he is still living, whatever his business may be, Lem Munson is making good, for he was one of the kind that never advertised anything that he could not do.

A few days ago, I was introduced to a man who was spending a few days in Janesville by the name of Frank Hunt. He was a small man with a clean shaved face, and his hair as white as snow. For a moment I could not place him, but after taking a good look at him, I slapped him on the shoulder and said, "This is not Frank Hunt, but it is Miss Frankie Hunt." And sure enough, I had called the



turn, for Frank Hunt for years in the business was known to the public as Miss Frankie Hunt, the world's greatest bareback rider and the best female impersonator that I ever saw. But when I knew him more than thirty-five years ago, his hair was as black as a crow. When made up in female attire for his act, he could mount a horse and do as good a bareback act as anyone in the business, and the public for years never knew but what it was Miss Frankie Hunt.

Ed Ballard

He started in the business with P. A. Older, who for a time made Janesville his home, and later his winter quarters were in Independence, Iowa. After leaving the Older Show, Frank Hunt went to the Poge O'Brien show, where he remained some years as a bareback rider, but the last two or three years with the O'Brien Show, he was assistant manager to Mr. O'Brien, and at times had charge of the advance, as the general agent ahead of the show. Frank Hunt always was a big alaried man, and for some years back has been connected with hotels in different cities, and at the present time owns a hotel in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Frank has carried his age well, has the same feminine face, which always carries a smile, and is a most interesting character to visit with. He commenced in the business in the early 70's and as he has filled many important positions around the show, he is always glad to meet an old timer and go back and rehearse over the yesterdays of long ago. It is visits with Frank Hunt's kind that carries me back to many bright spots in the business years ago.

Ed Ballard, whose home is at West Baden, Indiana, and is one of the principal stockholders in the Hagenbeck-Wallace Show, has reason to feel proud of the reception given his show at his hometown where they showed on the eleventh of

September. It is here at West Baden that Ed Ballard is building winter quarters for the show, and to show their appreciation and high esteem in which they hold Mr. Ballard in his hometown, is shown by a letter received here which contains the following:

Over ten thousand people came to West Baden on Saturday, September



11, to see the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, and everyone of that vast throng knew Ed personally or through his neighbors. Ed is the familiar salutation heard on every hand, when Ed Ballard is hustling around his usual haunts, be that in the famous club rooms, the luxurious hotels or on the rural highway with his boots covered with mud and his clothes decorated with hay seed. The unprecedented crowds

in West Baden and French Lick on this date furnished the indisputable evidence of the sincere admiration all the people of that part of Indiana have for Ed Ballard. A genial, generous, courteous, approachable and accommodating man, he draws men to him as if by magnetism, and instead of being treated with indifference and coldness as many men of wealth and position are treated, Ed Ballard attracts and holds friends, and consequently when word was circulated that his show was coming to West Baden and French Lick, every Mother's son and daughter and their neighbors, the entire population, simply rose en masse and marched to the beautiful golf links where the city of tents had been located.

The Motion and Southern roads had provided as they thought, an abundance of equipment to handle the crowds, but they miscalculated, for two extra trips had to be made by the excursion trains to get the people who had been left behind for lack of cars. The weather was perfect, the crowd immense, and the performance superb.

The parade was taken over to French Lick and returned via the boulevard along which the new win-

ter quarters are to be located. At the head of the parade, in a carriage, rode the Honorable W. Sinclair, the man who conceived the idea of the present wonderful structure known as the West Baden Hotel. This grand old man of southern Indiana generously permitted the circus to use the beautiful golf links adjacent to this hotel free of charge, his one wish being that everyone be happy on this occasion. With Mr. Sinclair rode Ed Ballard, the principle owner of the show, and Charles E. Cory, the general manager.

After the night performance, the employees of the show thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Ballard by participating in the dance in the parlors of the beautiful Homestead Hotel and indulging in a lavish Dutch lunch, which he provided. The French Lick orchestra furnished excellent music for the occasion. The circus trains were purposely held until an early hour Sunday morning.

#### October 23, 1915

A few days ago I received a letter from an old friend, telling me of the misfortune of Frank A. Robbins, whose show went to the wall some four weeks ago. While he gave me many particulars of Frank A. Robbins' misfortune in the last few years, in his early career I knew as much, or possibly more, than any other one about Frank A. Robbins and the show, which he started from, is small beginning.

It was along in the 70's that Frank A. Robbins, who was then not much more than a tramp, came to Philadelphia looking for work with the Adam Forepaugh Show. He was given a position as candy butcher with the show, which meant that he was to peddle popcorn and lemonade for the candy stands.

The young man put in a few years with the Adam Forepaugh show, saved his money and finally got a few horses and wagons together, and with the aid of his old employer, Adam Forepaugh, put a small wagon show on the road, which for some years ago was an eastern show, taking in only the small towns through Pennsylvania and New York.

Year after year, Mr. Forepaugh helped young Robbins, not only with stock and animals for his show, but



at different times gave him money to paint up the show in the winter, so that it could go out in the spring looking like a new show. From a small beginning, Frank A. Robbins finally grew until he bought a few cars and then the show was launched out as a railroad show, and had gradually grown until it took two sections to carry it over the road, and for some years was quite prominent in the business.

But this last season was certainly the worst that show had ever seen; and the show struck many towns where they were unable to unload and yet all the expenses had to be paid and the show moved on to the next town. The steady rains and blowdowns, which this show encountered all through the season, made it impossible for it to survive, as the bank account in the spring was not a heavy one. Some four weeks ago the show, which had taken more than thirty-five years of the best of Frank A. Robbins' life to build up, was all gone.

It was every spring and fall during my time with Adam Forepaugh that I would meet Frank A. Robbins in Philadelphia, for it was near thereof that he wintered his show for many years. But Frank was the kind that could make the best of any misfortune that befell him, and it was said that he would always bob up serenely with a smile on his face and say that it was always the darkest before day, and that his luck would certainly change for the better. But as Frank A. Robbins is seventy years of age, it is a question whether he can come back and get another start in the business or not, but his friends all hope that he can.

In looking back for years of the men that became rich and famous in the business, I can only recall one that was well to do when he started in the business, and that man was Adam Forepaugh. All the rest built up their shows from a small beginning, and little did they think when struggling over the road with a few horses and wagons that they were laying the foundation for a name that would go far toward making history for years after they were dead and gone. Adam Forepaugh was said to be worth more than a hundred thousand dollars when he came to

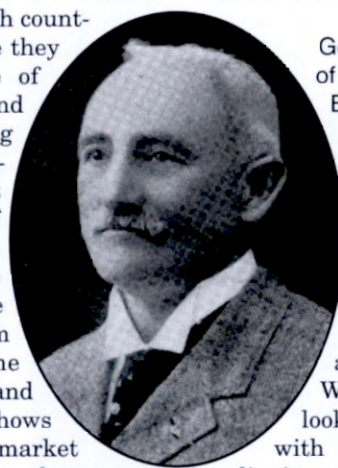
Delavan and paid \$45,000 for the Mabie show, and the most of this he made buying horses for the government during the Civil War.

But Barnum, Bailey, Cooper, Hutchinson, Cole, Robbins, the Ringlings all commenced in a small way and went through countless hardships before they reached the middle of the ladder of fame. And as for the Ringling brothers, they possibly came to the front faster than any of the others; for about the time they got to be a power in the business, Adam Forepaugh died, the Sells brothers died, and both of these great shows were thrown on the market and the Ringlings were the ones that eventually took them over. Then came the death of P. T. Barnum, and a little later James A. Bailey, and it was the Ringlings, and only them that could take over this great show and manage it successfully, which they did.

George Arlington, an old friend of mine for thirty-five years, and who for many years was manager of the privileges of the Barnum and Bailey Show (but for some years back has been financial manager and door tender of the 101 Ranch), has finally concluded to retire from the business, or at least from the active management of the 101 Ranch, Miller Bros. and Arlington Wild West Show; and has sold out his interest to a stock company, and will retire to his old home in New York City, which has been his home since his boyhood days. No reasons are given for Mr. Arlington's determination to quit, other than that he feels he has earned a well-needed rest.

The retirement of Mr. Arlington would place the entire burden of managing the show upon the shoulders of Col. Joseph C. Miller; but the rapidly growing oil, cattle and ranch interests of the Miller brothers make it imperative that the Colonel give a great deal of his time to their handling. And for this reason, it was thought best to form a stock company and interest some responsible showmen or business men who will take

an active interest in and assist with the management of the show. The 101 Ranch has always been a big money-maker, but 1915 will easily prove its banner year, it being confidently expected that the net profits will be over \$200,000.



George Arlington, manager of privileges on Barnum and Bailey.

The Gollmar Bros. show, which closed the season a few days ago in Oklahoma, passed through Janesville yesterday on their way to their winter quarters and home in Baraboo, Wis. Judging from the looks of the heavy wagons with the mud and clay still clinging to them, it would seem that they had certainly passed through the season unprecedented for bad weather and roads in the history of the show. I did not see any of the Gollmar brothers, but one of the men connected with the show told me the season had not been one they could brag of in a financial point of view.

The Al G. Barnes Animal Show, which is the largest and best of its kind in this country, opened at the San Diego Fair on October 17th for an engagement lasting until March 16th. The side shows will be located in the Isthmus Building until the close of the fair. They will certainly add to the San Diego Fair, and will be one of the greatest cards in the way of entertainment they could possibly ask, as Mr. Barnes has not only got a high class show, but is a gentleman and a business man of the highest type.

#### October 30, 1915

While at times Adam Forepaugh would be gruff and almost surly, both to outsiders and people with the show, there were times, as the people around the show would say, he would have on his visiting clothes and would be one of the readiest kind of visitors; and this, many times, would be when there was a light house in the evening and it only took him a few minutes to count up the tickets.

One of this kind came in '89 which



was his last season in the business, and after counting up the evening house, he pushed back the door which was the division between his end of the ticket wagon and mine, and commenced a kind of a review of his life in the business.

"Dave," he said, "in show business, and perhaps it would hold true in almost any kind of business, it is necessary for one to make a trail of their own. It don't pay to follow somebody else's theory, for if you got to make a way of your own, there will always be someone when you get through to ask you where you have been and what you did. And this I tried to do early in my career in show business.

"My first venture after I had been in the business for two years, as you well know, was to hire Dan Rice for twenty-six weeks with the wagon show at the enormous salary of one thousand dollars per week and expenses, for at that time he was better known the world over than either P. T. Barnum or myself, and I considered him the best feature that I could possibly get, which he proved to be, and that proved to be a good season for me, which was my third year in the business.

"My next venture was to advertise the largest wagon show in the world with the menagerie as the main feature, and I carried fifty-two cages of animals over the road that season. This also proved a big season, and the show closed in the fall with nearly as much money to the good as the Dan Rice season. The white elephant, as you know, was another feature which cost a world of money, and yet that too was another good season.

Louise Montague, the Ten Thousand Dollar Beauty.

"But the greatest feature of all was Louise Montague, the Ten Thousand Dollar Beauty." And the old man's face brightened up with a smile. "Do you recollect the fun we had opening the thousands of letters that came from all over the world, and everyone contained a photograph of the writer? The Ten Thousand Dollar

Beauty, as you know, originated with Charles H. Day, the newspaper man, and one of the brightest that I ever knew; but poor Charlie had his failing, that booze partner of his always making him trouble. For you know, Dave, Charles Day could fall off of the water wagon oftener than a poor bareback rider could fall off of her horse. But for all that, when he was right, he was one of the best newspapermen, and a man of original ideas.

"When he first talked to me about a Ten Thousand Dollar Beauty, I was a little skeptical, but Charlie Day would have his own way, and immediately after the show closed, he commenced to advertise in many of the eastern papers that I would pay \$10,000 and expenses for the handsomest woman in the world to travel with the show. Day also sent advertisement to European papers, and as you know, it was only a short time until letters commenced arriving at the Chestnut Street office by the thousands, with the photograph of the writer in each one. All during the day there would be from four to eight men opening the mail, reading the letters and looking over the photographs; and in the evening more than double that amount would be there, as the letters were accumulating rapidly and you know you, Addie

(meaning his son) and myself were there several nights until midnight, reading the different letters and looking over the photographs."

"Do you recollect," said old Mr. Forepaugh, "the letter that the young lady wrote from London, and this like many others said that 'I have been in two different beauty contests in London, winning both of them by a large majority, but should I be chosen to fill the position, I would expect my mother to travel with me and we should want round trip tick-

ets to America and return, with a reasonable amount of expense money, and would expect you give a

bond for the \$10,000 salary.'

"You know," said Mr. Forepaugh, my Addie opened that letter and read it and handed it to me, saying, 'Pop, here is the girl for you to hire. She is certainly no cheapskate.' But there was no chance for a European woman to get the engagement, for there was something more necessary to the position than a handsome face."

Charles H. Day, as well as Adam Forepaugh, insisted on seeing the applicant and talking with her; for with all the rest, they had to be good, for it was the press as well entertainers, and a woman of a good fair education as the public that they had to make an impression on.

"Do you recollect, Dave," Mr. Forepaugh said again, "the photograph that Day showed me and said, 'Governor, just take a look at that. You could scarcely tell by looking at that picture whether she was going or coming. No chance for her. Throw it in the waste paper basket.' And it is fair to say that the boys who opened the letters before the show opened had more fun than any ten-year old boy had at his first circus.

"But, Dave," said the old man, "You well know the rest of the story, for the show cleared up more than three-fourths of a million that season, and the difference between that and an ordinary season was due to the drawing powers of Louise Montague, the Ten Thousand Dollar Beauty."

The old man continued by saying, "You know, Dave, she married a well-to-do lawyer in New York City where she is still making her home, but I have not happened to see her since she left the show at the close of the season.

"In the two weeks that the show exhibited at Philadelphia, there was but one or two evenings that we did not turn away thousands of people. One evening, in particular, over 6,000 people, which were turned away from the big show, went into the side show as they seemed to be show crazy and wanted to get somewhere where they could see something out of the ordinary. So that it was not only the big show that made a world of money that season, but all the privileges as well."

But by this time it was getting late and old Charlie, who had been





patiently waiting up on top of the circus treasury wagon to drive to the loading place at the railroad, pounded on top of the roof and asked when the night hands were coming on, and only for this there is no telling when the old showman would have told his last story. This, I think, was the last, long visit that I had with Adam Forepaugh in the ticket wagon.

Word comes from the Hagenbeck-Wallace show, which at present is in the south, saying business is big, the weather fine and no date as yet set for the closing of the season. With the exception of a few stands, which were missed on account of bad weather, the show has had a big business and the prospects now are that they will run up close to the holidays. The Ringling show, which is also in the south, will close their season on November first at Memphis, Tenn., after which they will ship direct to their winter quarters in Baraboo.

Two of my old friends in the business, Ed Shipp and Roy Feltus, are organizing a show at Springfield, Ill., which they will take to Central America, South America and the West Indies, sailing from the United States early in December. Ed Shipp has been in the business all his life and is the husband of Julia Lowande, who was one of the principal bareback riders with the Adam Forepaugh show for many years; in fact, all the time that I was with the show. Shipp and Feltus have had a man, who is well posted in those countries, traveling over the grounds for many weeks, and brings back glowing accounts of the prospects of such a show in that far off country. It will be a nice show for people to travel with, for they will all stop at the best hotels, and on an average will not play more than two matinees during the week, and in most places they will be stationed for a week or more at a time. They will carry with them the best wishes of thousands of friends in the business for the success of the show, for it is a venture that few showmen would care to undertake. Ed Shipp has promised to write me later, as soon as the show gets to doing business, and give me a detailed account of the

country and the success of the show.

### November 7, 1915

The old home of Burr Robbins on Eastern Avenue caught fire early Tuesday morning and only by quick and heroic work on the part of the firemen, the last of the famous buildings of the Burr Robbins home and winter quarters for so many years would have been gone. This for many years was pointed out to visitors as one of the points of interest that Janesville people were proud of. Many a Christmas, New Year and Sunday turkey dinner I have eaten in the Robbins' home, for Mrs. Robbins was not only a business woman and always with the show, but at home was a housekeeper and cook, and never happier than when surrounded by friends in her own home. The Watt family was there to a



A Shipp and Feltus Circus letter-head.

Sunday dinner on January 13, 1880, which was the day that Mr. Robbins' launch collided with Court Street Bridge, which came so near costing him his life.

But the big horse barn, the ring barn, paint shops and blacksmith shops are all gone and most of the land, so all that remains of the once famous place is the old homestead and a few acres of land. It was in and around this old mansion that I spent five years of the best of my life. And while Burr Robbins and I did not always agree, and more than once he told me that next year he would have a real manager, when the time came, real managers were so high that he made up his mind to get along with

the one he had, and so he did, until he went out of the business. While at times I thought him a hard master to serve, yet whatever I knew about the business, I must give Burr Robbins the credit.

On Wednesday last, the Ringling show pulled into the winter quarters at Baraboo and the wise old elephants waved their trunks and trumpeted to the town folks to let them know they were glad to get home once more. They seemed to know everyone they met, and made double quick time for the old homestead which has sheltered them so long. Before you read this article, all that belongs to the great Ringling show will be put away in the winter quarters and soon there will be many men put to work remodeling the show for another season. So that for the owners and managers of a great show like this, there is but little vacation time, for as soon as the show season proper is over, it is the same old story of remodeling and getting ready for another season. What the great feature of the show will be for the coming season is probably not definitely settled, as yet, but it will not be so long until we will be notified that this or that will be the feature of the great show for the season of 1916 and that the show will open at the Coliseum in Chicago at such a time for several weeks.

Chicago always gives this show a warm welcome and starts them in the business a month or more earlier than it would be possible to show under canvas. As I have seen none of the Ringlings since the closing of the show, I know but little about what the season has been in a financial way, yet those big shows are like the *Birth of a Nation*. they draw people for miles around, and I never knew one in my time in the business to close without many thousands of dollars to the good.

When the remodeling of the show for the season of 1916 has really begun, there will be any-where from seventy-five to one hundred or more men employed at the winter quarters at Baraboo until everything is in readiness to take the road. And with



the wintering of hundreds of horses, hay and oats for the elephants and meat for the animals, this all means that there will be thousands of dollars spent in and around Baraboo the coming winter. And it is this great show that has made Baraboo and the state of Wisconsin famous all over the world for many years.

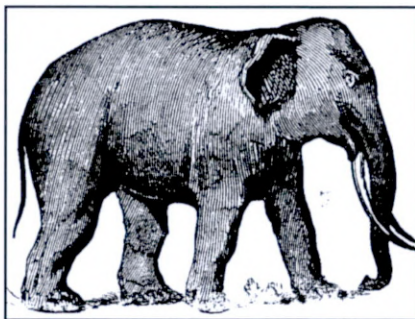
Another old-timer and a friend of mine with whom I traveled many years with the Adam Forepaugh show has passed and gone. His name was Albert Foss, and "Al" was one of the old reliable billposters that could always be depended upon. Al was suddenly taken sick and died in a sanitarium far from home and friends. He had a complication of diseases and his age was against him. Albert Foss joined Ringling Bros. advertising car No. 2 at Springfield, Mass., May 21 last. He was a member of the Billposters Union, Local 17, of Boston, Mass. His friends were legion.

The following letter from the Hagenbeck-Wallace show will give you something of an idea of the way the different people with one of the big shows will spend their time the coming winter: "A number of the folks have already announced what they will do after the season closes. The Australian Waites will play the S. & C. Time, Arthur Borella will also play vaudeville dates. Bert Cole will join his wife with the Tango Shoes act. The Three Diericks Bros. will play the Loew Time. Oscar Lowande will go to his home in Reading, Mass., where he will practice a new riding act for next season. The Tugene troupe of acrobats expects to play the New York Hippodrome, where they were all last winter."

The only time with the Adam Forepaugh show that I was ever late in opening the wagon was at Toledo, Ohio. I was about fifteen minutes late, and there was some five or six thousand people crowded around the wagon and the door tenders all taking money at the door. To say that Adam Forepaugh lost his head is putting it mild, for as soon as he saw the door of the wagon raised, he started for the wagon with his old hickory cane in the air, declaring that there would be a new man in that position the next year. But the crowd was so great that it closed the old man out,

and it was more than three-quarters of an hour before he could get to where he could talk to me. And it was weeks after that he occasionally would refer to it, but my time came a little later.

Adam Forepaugh ran all his privileges, even to his own cook tent, and whenever the old man could make the people believe that it was impossible for him to get any butter in the town, he could figure to a cent just how much he had saved in not having butter for the three meals. But this was carried a little too far, and the working men, about 500 in number, when supper was called one evening, took a look at the table and found that there was no butter and one or two other things missing. They



made up their minds long before that when it happened again there would be something doing. They all left the cook tent in a body and went right for the front door, where the old man was sitting and surrounded him. It was a wild looking mob, and Mr. Forepaugh was not feeling as easy as he might have been. My wagon, which was six or eight rods away, was visited by a committee of a dozen or more, telling me their troubles. I told them that I knew what had been going on, but that I had made up my mind that it was their affairs, but any time when it came to the show down, all they had to do was to come to the wagon and I would give them an order for anything that was reasonable in that direction.

I jumped from the side door of the ticket wagon, right over into the mob and knew well who the ring-leader would naturally be, took them over to the wagon, give them an order for butter and everything else that was necessary to give at the table as it should have been in the first place and told them never to go near Mr. Forepaugh when anything was want-

ed, but come direct to me and I would see to it. I gave them an order from the boss hostler for his horse and buggy, and they were soon on their way down town. The supper table was held until their return with everything for their meal that they had demanded. When Adam Forepaugh came out to count up the house that evening, he said, "Dave, you have certainly redeemed yourself. While you were late opening the wagon in Toledo, you certainly were here on time tonight, when it did not look good to me. Hereafter I will see that there is always a few tubs of butter in the refrigerator car in case we come to a town where it cannot be procured. So we will call it even."

#### November 13, 1915

One of the saddest funerals was held in Baraboo on Thursday of last week. The deceased was Babe, [an] elephant said to be a few more than one hundred years old. Old Babe, as she was known around the show, was the first elephant owned by the Ringlings, and in fact the only one for some years. It was in the early days of the wagon show that old Babe played an important part. On the long drives when they would come to a steep hill and the tired horses could no longer do the toting, it was old Babe that would come to the rescue and put her head to the wagon and give the tired horses a boost up hill; or if the hind wheels had sunk deep into a mud hole, it was always old Babe on the job. She would hook her trunk under the hind axle and lift it to solid ground.

Babe was as kind and gentle as a lamb, and on account of her long and valued service, stood closer to the Ringlings than any animal with the show. She never missed a season on the road until this year, when the Ringlings decided to leave old Babe at home and give her a long needed rest. But the quiet of the winter quarters was not altogether to her liking, and at different times during the summer she was sick but always able to be around. It was on Wednesday of last week that the great show arrived in Baraboo, and soon all the elephants were on their way to the winter quarters, where they found old Babe, who had been sick for some time. The homecoming



of her old friends, with whom she had been associated with for so many years, proved to be too much for her, and in a few minutes old Babe sank to her bed of straw and in less than ten minutes was dead.

It was the general opinion of John Smith, who has been the keeper of the elephants for many years that old Babe died from over joy. On Thursday, the following day, the funeral of old Babe took place, the hearse being a huge stone boat driven by sixteen of the heaviest teams of the show; and old Babe was taken to a secluded spot on the Ringling farm where burial took place. Telegrams of condolence were received from the elephants with the Barnum show from Bridgeport, Conn., from the Sells-Floto, Buffalo Bill show at Denver, and from Hagenbeck-Wallace at West Baden, Indiana, all of whom had known old Babe ever since circuses were first organized.

John Smith, who for so many years has had charge of the Ringling elephants, read the service and the honorary pall bearers were the eight quadrille dancing elephants who have done so much to entertain millions of people who attended the great Ringling show for several years past. Old Babe was buried in a gully on the Ringling farm not so far from the famous Devil's Lake, and the huge boulders near by will serve as monuments for centuries to come, and her memory will long be cherished for her many kind deeds, although only an elephant.

Saturday evening I had a most interesting talk on the season's work of the great Ringling show with Dennis Morrissey of this city, who for the past ten years has been head blacksmith with the show and who was home on a few days' visit with his family. Mr. Morrissey not only gave many interesting items of the season's travel, but also gave me a route book for the entire season. The show opened at the Coliseum in Chicago on April 17 and took the road under canvas in Ohio on May 5th, their first stand being Zanesville, a little more than 500 miles from Chicago. The Ringlings were certainly born under a lucky



Inside the Ringling Bros. Circus dining car.

star, for the season, despite the rain and storms, stands second on the list, which means that the show made plenty of money, and during the entire season only missed one town, which was Moberly, Mo. And although the day was beautiful, the only lot obtainable was overflowed with water. The show went on through to the next town; and after Moberly they did not miss an afternoon or a nightstand and almost invariably were either ahead or behind the storms.

On account of the foot and mouth disease, there were sixteen camels left at the winter quarters, and split hoof animals of different kinds, which could not be taken out this season with any kind of safety, left the show two box cars short of what it had had heretofore. There were eighty-eight cars in all, all of which were sixty feet in length or more. The show was taken over the road in four sections. It took sixteen sleepers to accommodate the people, two privilege cars and a private car of the Ringlings. The two privilege cars are used as dining cars for the people with the show, each of which has a manager, a cook and two waiters. One of these cars is to serve the working people and the other the performers and managers, where hundreds of them get their lunches after the big show is out at night. The show exhibited in twenty-five states. The longest run was 660 miles and the shortest one four miles. The show made one Sunday run of 334 miles.

There were about 1,280 people on the payroll; and when you come to serve three meals a day to this number, it is certainly doing some hotel

business. Ollie Webb, who has had charge of it for many years; looks after the department and no one knows better than he how to buy and serve so many people. Although Mr. Webb contracts for most of the bread and pies in the different towns, he carried many cooks, two or more for each department, and in case it becomes necessary, he has bread makers and ovens large enough to serve the entire company.

Wednesday noon an old friend of mine arrived from Peru, Indiana, where he has made his home for the last ten or twelve years. His name is William Hart, who was born and raised in Janesville; but started out in show business in the wagon show days, something like forty years ago. It was many a dark night that Will Hart and I put in with the wagon show back in the 70's. As I had not seen him for several years, we made every minute count in our visit over the old days in the business. Mr. Hart now owns a large dairy farm just outside the city limits of Peru, Indiana, and was on his way to Fort Atkinson to buy some blooded stock for his farm.

"I have only got an hour and a half here, Dave," said Mr. Hart, "so if we go over much of the early days in the business we will have to drive fast."

Mr. Hart for several years was interested in the privileges of the Hagenbeck & Wallace show; but retired some years ago and is now the proprietor of one of the finest stock farms in that part of Indiana. As he has not lived here for many years, he found but few old friends here, and said upon leaving if it was possible he would slip down to Janesville and spend Sunday with as many of his old friends as he could find. Will Hart was always a good fellow in the business, was a money-maker, and has helped many old down-and-out showmen, more than anyone I ever knew in the business. The best that can come to Will Hart will be none too good.

A gentleman stopped off to spend the day in Janesville, which he told me, was the first visit in forty-one years. "In '74" he said, "I left



Janesville with the Burr Robbins show as a driver. The boss hostler at that time was Frank Higby. And at the close of the show that fall, I recollect well the show was quartered in their new home in Spring Brook for the first time. I have been with the Ringling show for several years, and more than once when passing through Janesville made up my mind that some time I would stop off and spend a few days, and look over the old place where I spent my first year in show business. I was just nineteen years of age; and although I did not find show business quite as rosy as it had been pictured to me, yet I stayed the season. And this started me in the business which has practically been my life work ever since, and I have only missed two seasons in all that time. When I inquired if there was any of the Burr Robbins people left in Janesville, your name was the only one mentioned. Although I never knew you or traveled with a show that you were with, I have heard much about you with different shows that I have been with. The only thing that looks natural to me now in the old winter quarters is the old home of Burr Robbins, which still stands back in the grove, but well scorched with the recent fire. In all these years I have been with the O'Brien show, the Barnum & Bailey, the Frank A. Robbins, and the Ringling."

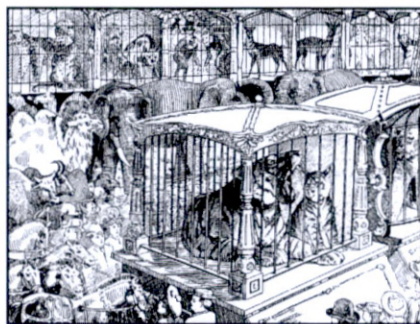
When I asked the old man where he made his home, he said, "Well, I have wintered several times in Chicago, but I have always taken pretty good care of myself and my money, and I am now on my way to visit a married sister who lives on a farm a few miles out of Freeport, Ill."

Then I asked the old man if he expected to go out next year with the show, and he said, "Oh, surely. Don't think any other kind of work would hardly suit me now." And in a short time the old man took a train for Freeport to visit his sister, whom he has not seen for many years.

#### November 20, 1915

On Wednesday of this week I took the train over the Northwestern road for Baraboo, Wis., where I had been invited to be the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Al. Ringling at the opening of their beautiful new theater. On

entering the train at Janesville, I was soon greeted by many old friends, among them Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ringling and their son, Robert, who make their home at Evanston, Illinois; Alf. T. Ringling and son, Richard, of New York City, and many other prominent circus people, who for many years have been with the Ringling and the Barnum shows. Theatrical men, scene painters, canvas makers, and many prominent citizens from Chicago and other towns, all were bound for Baraboo to do honor to a man who had the courage to build in that city one of the finest, if not the finest, playhouse in America, Mr. Alf Ringling.



At Madison many prominent people joined the party, among whom were the son-in-law and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ringling. And by the time the train reached Baraboo, it was crowded like an excursion train bound for the big Ringling circus. On our arrival in Baraboo, Henry Ringling was there with a big touring car to meet his brother Charles and family. The crowd soon left the depot in different directions, everybody in hurry, and seeming to know just where they wanted to go. Many of the old employees visited the winter quarters, and others the homes of old friends.

As soon as I had brushed off a little of the dust, I was on my way to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Al Ringling. As it was information that I was looking after, I made up my mind there was only one place to go and that was to headquarters. In a few minutes I was at the palatial home, which is only a short distance around the corner from the theatre. [At] the massive home, with its many entrances, it was difficult for me, as they would say with the circus, 'to

pick out the main entrance," but I finally pushed the button and a male servant appeared at the door, and asked me for my card; but I politely told him that I only had one deck in my pocket and I did not care to break that; but I was an old friend of Mr. Ringling and was there only to make an informal call. He ushered me into a large room which Mr. Ringling has used much of the time through his sickness as kind of a business office; and I found him busy dictating telegrams and letters to his secretary. And I was soon seated in a big easy leather chair, and Al said to his secretary: "Young man, there will be nothing more doing for a time, for I have many questions to ask Mr. Watt, and we will make a visit here while you run up town and attend to some other business."

I soon told Mr. Ringling the business part of my visit was to find out as much of the particulars as possible about the beautiful, new playhouse and how he came to build so fine and beautiful a theater in a city the size of Baraboo.

The ground on which the theatre is built, and which has been owned by Mr. Ringling for some time, is eighty-eight feet frontage on the corner, almost directly opposite the old stone court house, and 132 feet deep. But after Mr. Ringling had his plans for the building all completed and just the size that he wanted it, he found that he was short four feet of ground in the rear of the building, which he would have to have in order to get just the size auditorium and stage that he had figured on. This land fortunately belonged to the city and he was not long in getting a deed of the extra four feet. In a few days the work was commenced, which was early in the spring.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesday when everything was completed and put in shape, ready to be occupied in the evening. The building is as near fire-proof as it is possible to build one, the entire front being of two shades of granite and white marble, and the entire building reinforced steel and cement. There are two lobbies at the main entrance of the theatre, a beautiful marble trimmed office being in the first lobby. At the second entrance there are six swinging



doors; and on entering the second lobby, there is a beautiful fountain, and opposite on the right is what they called an Italian rest bench. From this you enter the main floor, which contains 844 seats, raised from the stage so that every seat gives as good a view of the stage as does the front row. There are seventeen boxes, which contain six seats each.

Beautiful dark red velvet carpets cover the cement floor on the inside, as they also do down the main aisle. The curtains and draperies in the box are in keeping with the carpets and of the same color. The huge marble columns on the inside, with their brass trimming, presented a most beautiful sight. As the tickets were all sold in advance, the lights were kept well turned down until the entire audience was seated. And it was almost time for the curtain to go up when the entire lighting plant in a second was turned on. The cheers that went up from the people at their first sight at the new playhouse was deafening and lasted for some minutes.

In the private boxes were many prominent people from different parts of the state--Gov. Philipp and a party of friends being in one box; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ringling and family in another; and Mrs. Henry Ringling and friends and Al Ringling and his wife with some friends in another. As a large party of the audience came in full dress, it was certainly a wonderful sight to behold.

After Mr. Ringling had given me as many particulars as possible about the building, I asked him what I should say about the cost, or the approximate cost, of the entire investment, and he simply smiled and shook his head and said, "Nothing doing. That, Dave," said he "has never entered into the game. My object from start to finish was to give the people as fine a playhouse for the size of it as there was, anywhere, and the architects and finishers and many theatrical men have said that I have accomplished my undertaking. And if so, then I am satisfied, for I have had much pleasure in all the years that I have been in the business, and although at times it seemed hard,

it was a pleasure for me to make the money and now if I have done something with a part of it that will bring pleasure to my friends and neighbors, have accomplished something."

And if the warm welcome that Al Ringling and his esteem able wife received in their private box at the close of the show goes for anything, their friends are legion.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry North and friends occupied a box next to Mr. and Mrs. Al Ringling. Mrs. North is the only sister of the Ringling brothers.

Sosman & Landis Company of Chicago did the scenic painting in the new theatre. Gustave Brand of New York and Chicago were the decorators. The Ornamental Plaster & Carving Company did the plasterwork. The Wiley Brothers of Chicago were the general contractors; Charles Kieckner of Baraboo, the general painting; Mandel Bros. of Chicago furnished the draperies, carpets and seat coverings; Victor S. Peariman Company installed the lighting fixtures of which there are 2,500.

The interior of the Al Ringling theatre in Baraboo.



The stage is 33 1/2 by 60 feet wide and 46 feet high, and the beautiful marquee awning reaches out to the edge of the sidewalk and is all metal and glass and underneath is a mass of electric lights. A massive fire curtain of asbestos, which is 24 x 40 feet and weighs 750 pounds, serves as a protection between the stage and the main floor. An organ, which cost \$5,000, was furnished by a local music house of Baraboo, and is said to be one of the finest of its kind in the country. The dressing rooms, of which there are many, are furnished with the latest of everything; in fact, nothing has been overlooked to make it the most complete theater of its size in all its appointments that there is in the country.

The ushers were in uniform, and all seemed to work as though they had been at it for years. Long before the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Al Ringling, their box was simply a bower of roses and beautiful flowers of all descriptions, among which was a piece over four feet high given them by the Commercial Club of Bamboo.

After the fall of the curtain on the first act, Governor Philipp was called upon for a speech, in which he said in part that he was there with other friends and neighbors to do honor to a man who had honored Baraboo and its people for so many years. He paid the Ringling brothers a glowing tribute for the way in which they had always conducted their business; and said without any question, they had done more to build up the models of the circus people than any who had ever been in the business. He congratulated the people of Bamboo and the surrounding country on their being so fortunate as to have a man in their community who would build such a beautiful playhouse, where they could go for years to come and always be proud to point it out to their friends as the theatre beautiful, which will always be known as the Al Ringling Theatre.

And as for myself, with the many old friends surrounding me, I almost fancied that I backed up thirty years or more and was again in the business; for I thought that I could smell the sawdust and the menagerie. But



the dream pipe soon went out and I had to bid my old friends adieu and take the train back home. But Wednesday, November 17th. put another bright day in my life, all through the kindness of an old friend whom I made in the circus business more than thirty years ago--Al Ringling.

#### November 27, 1915

In the early 80s with the Adam Forepaugh show, there were three of the greatest athletes at that time in the world, who had just returned from a European trip of a year and joined the show at the opening in Philadelphia. These great athletes were known as the Herbert Brothers, born and raised in Muncie, Indiana. It was along some time in the middle of the summer when the route card came out, Muncie, Indiana, being on the list and this was the first time that the Herbert Brothers had ever had a chance to work in their home town since they became famous. We arrived in Muncie early Sunday morning and it is fair to say that more than 3,000 people were at the depot to meet the show, or rather, the famous Herbert Brothers on our arrival. On Sunday evening, a wealthy man of the town gave the three Herberts a banquet at his home, and invited a few of their old friends from Muncie, and told the Herberts to invite ten or a dozen of their friends from the show, as he could easily accommodate thirty guests.

Fred Herbert, the older of the brothers, was a particular friend of Billie Burke's, but to have a little fun with Burke, Fred invited all the other boys early in the day and left Burke to the last; and all those invited would go to Burke and say they thought it was very funny that he was not invited, as he and the Herberts had traveled in Europe together and had always been close friends. Burke finally said that he thought Fred had used good judgment for, he said "a Joey (meaning a clown) had about as much business in society as the balking mule had on a heavy load." But soon after Burke was invited and it was he at the banquet that gave a good after dinner talk and told several stories. And the next afternoon at the per-

formance, it was a question which got the more applause, the Herbert Brothers or the Joey clown, Biffie Burke.

Muncie, Indiana, at that time was not much of a town and it was a question whether it was large enough for the big show, but on account of the Herberts' notoriety that they had had for three or four years, [they] proved a drawing card, and Muncie, Indiana, was numbered among the best days of that season.

On Wednesday of last week, when on our way to Baraboo, shortly after the train left Janesville, Charles Ringling, surrounded by a dozen or more show folks, said, "Dave, let me tell you a story about brother John and I going on to Philadelphia one winter to buy cars, cages and animals of your old friend, Adam Forepaugh. We were there several days, and after buying a few cars, several cages of animals and looking at many others that we thought we could use to good advantage, but did not feel as though we could spare the money just then, we told Mr. Forepaugh that that was all we would buy at present, but would probably want more next year. Mr.

A 1915 newspaper ad for Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West featuring Jess Willard.

Forepaugh said, 'You had better take that cage with the lioness in.' But we protested and told him that we did not care to go in debt and that we thought we had already bought all that we could spare the money for at the present time."

So they settled up for what they considered enough to make a good menagerie for the coming year, paid Mr. Forepaugh the cash, and left for home. Mr. Forepaugh was to ship the five carloads the next day and send two men through with them from Philadelphia to Baraboo. On their arrival at Baraboo, Mr. Ringling said the lioness and lion with their cage was loaded with the rest, and the man in charge had a letter from Mr. Forepaugh saying that he thought they would like them so he had them sent along, and that they could pay for them when they got ready, that he could spare them as well as not, and that he knew that they would help to fill out their menagerie, and they could pay the price talked of that winter without interest at any time in the future.

"And from that time on," said Mr. Ringling, "we always had a warm spot in our hearts for Adam Forepaugh for the interest he took in us when we were small in the business, compared to the great show that he had at that time."

When at dinner at Al Ringling's home that day, Al said, "Dave, did I ever tell you about the first time I showed in Baraboo? Well," said he, "it was like this, I started out a small hall show with a few people, and playing small towns, and it was some struggle at times to get from one town to another. At that time, I would send a man ahead for two or three days with small dodgers, about four inches wide and six inches long, and he would leave half a dozen in each of the stores, and this was all the billing that the show would get. Along in the season, we showed in Oregon, Wis., and from there we were going to Baraboo. Well, we landed in Oregon with very little money and after the show that night we had just money enough to pay for the hall and the hotel bill, and nothing to get to Baraboo on. But I finally gave the agent there a good talk, and he allowed us to go on our

MADISON AVENUE GROUNDS **YOUNGSTOWN, SAT. 4** APT. 2:15 AND NIGHT 8:15

**101 RANCH**

**REAL WILD WEST**

**AND WORLD'S CHAMPION**

**JESS WILLARD**

(HIMSELF)

Positively Appearing at Every Performance

The Cowboy Champion

Jess Willard's 6' 10" Reach

The Champion with the Champion Whip

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trunks, as the saying is, to Baraboo, where the trunks were to be held by the railroad company until the money was paid. There was no possible way for me to get the trunks out until after the doors opened for the show in the evening, and then [we] had to take the chances on the receipts. But I opened the doors early, had a dray near the entrance, and as soon as I had taken in money enough, I was on my way to the depot with the old horse and dray to get the baggage. Of course, this made us late opening and the boys were stamping their feet and whistling, but as soon as I arrived with the baggage I stepped out and told them that we had been detained on account of not getting our baggage, but the show would open in a few minutes. Of course I did not tell them why we were detained. We had a fair house in Bamboo, and this was the first time that the Ringling show ever showed in their home town."

I asked him if that was the night that he conceived the idea of building the beautiful new theatre.

"No, indeed," said he, "that was the night that I conceived the idea of getting the people and the baggage of the show to the next town. It was

more than one experience like this that I encountered before I got a real start in the business."

While there attending the opening of the new playhouse, I rather expected to be called upon to make a little speech, or at least a few remarks about the show business in an early day; but it beats all how hard luck will follow a man all through life. Probably some old timer had recollected the speech that I made in Lancaster at the Burr Robbins' show in '78 from the top of the ticket wagon, when my mouth positively refused to open. And, as you well know, one knocker can furnish plenty of hard work for twelve boosters. This story was probably well circulated and there was "nothing doing."

It certainly pays to be a prize fighter, especially if you are a top notcher and the world champion. A letter from Miller Brothers, and Arlington, owners of the 101 Ranch, gives the following story and actual figures of the amount paid to Jess Willard, the world's heavyweight champion, for the season of 1915, just closed: "With the announcement of November 20, as the closing date of Miller Bros. &

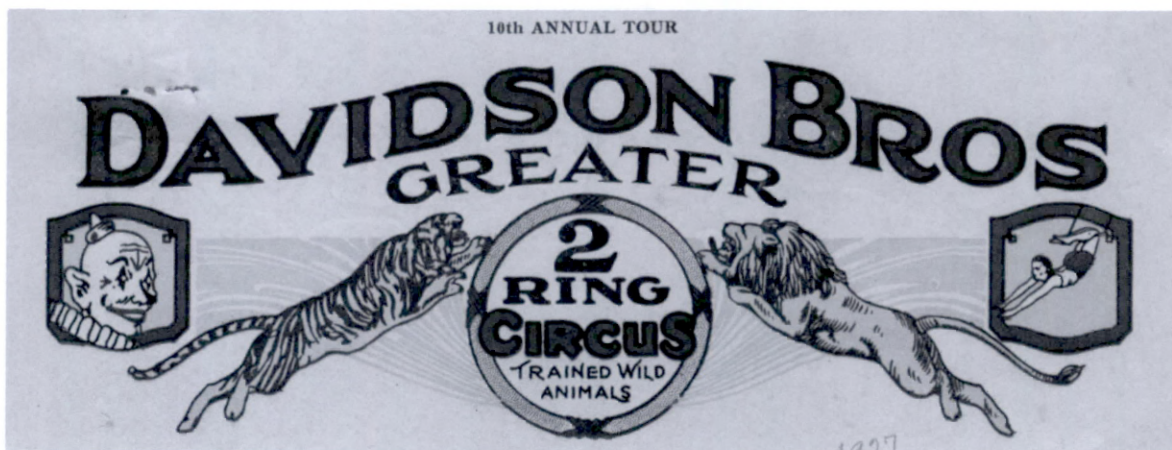
Arlington's 101 Ranch Wild West, the season of which, by the way, was the longest of any of the larger shows playing the East and Middle West, and probably the most successful financially, some interesting figures are given out concerning the amount paid the heavyweight champion, Jess Willard, for his summer engagement.

When Edward Arlington contracted Willard through Melville B. Raymond, acting for Willard and his managers Tom Jones, H. H. Frazee, Jack Curley and Harry Weber, Mr. Raymond was skeptical of the 101 Ranch show managers' ability to pay \$100,000 for a single feature, which Willard's managers considered his services worth for the summer.

Although Willard did not join the show until May 10 and closed at New Orleans October 31, the actual money paid him was \$103,496.48, by far the largest salary ever paid for a feature playing with an outdoor attraction. After the conclusion of Willard's engagement, the 101 engaged Eddie Coulon, contender for the lightweight championship, as a feature for the balance of the season.

The equipment will be wintered at Ponca City, Okla., the closing stand.

## Bill Kasiska's Letterheads



James and John Davidson operated their circus in 1927. The letterhead was printed in red, black and yellow.



# BANDWAGON

## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Vol. 46, No. 5

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2002

**FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER**

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### THE FRONT COVER

The Cliff Gregg cannon act appeared with Robbins Bros. Circus in 1930. The window card is from the Albert Conover collection.

Cannon acts were very popular in 1930, the Great Wilno was with Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and the Zacchinis were with Ringling-Barnum. The Cliff Aeros cannon was with the Sells-Floto Circus in 1929.

### THE BACK COVER

William Newton toured Orange Bros. Circus on trucks in 1927. The cover of the show's courier is shown. The inside pages are the same as Newton used on his Honest Bill and Orange Bros. and Moon Bros. shows. It was printed by the Quigley Litho Co. of Kansas City, Missouri

### IRS AUDIT

The Circus Historical Society Inc. was recently audited by the Internal Revenue Service. In August we were advised our annual returns were accepted with no change.

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### POSTAL NOTICE

The names and addresses of the publisher, editor and managing editor are: Publisher and editor, Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221; Managing editor, none.

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Publication of Statement of Ownership will be printed in the September-October 2002 issue of this publication.

I certify the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) Fred D. Pfening, Jr, publisher. (10-1-02)

## BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

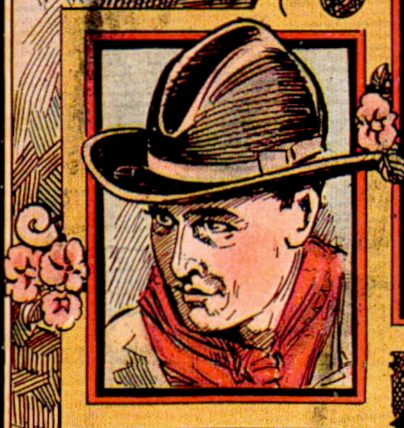
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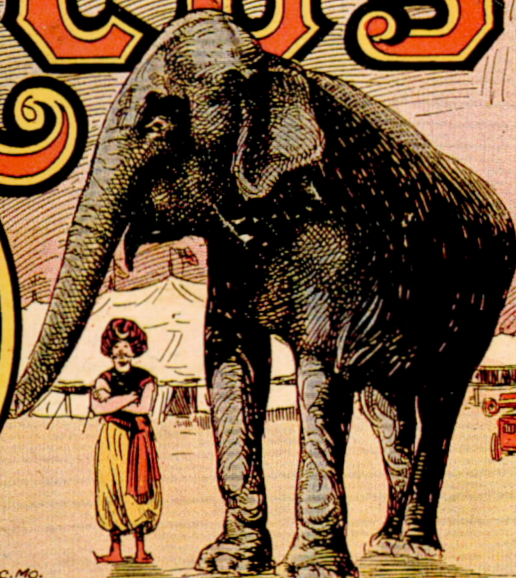
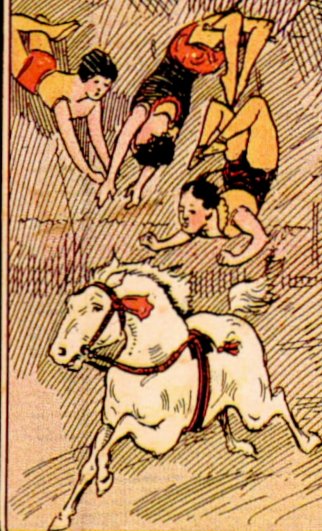


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